Art by Navella

If I had a chance, I would see myself through my family's eyes, because I care what they see in me, and I want them to be proud of me. I want them to know that I'm struggling, too. I'm hurting. I just want them to see that I'm a better man than when I came in juvenile hall. Damn, I really want them to see a young man who's not going to rob them, hurt them, lie, or cause them pain in their lives.

read the rest of Raul's POW on page 9

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.21

Welcome to issue 12.21's editorial note. Glad you stopped by to say hello and take in some of the priceless ramble we have put together for this fabulous issue.

It's always special when a negative situation brings about positive experiences. Like when we're locked up and we meet someone we probably never would've met if we weren't locked up. Or like when we are stressing about a warrant in court and the judge tells us we can deal with it on a level that's not even close to the madness we thought it was going to be. Well, The Beat Within is experiencing that very feeling as we speak. For as most of you know, we're at a very challenging financial period in our existence, and we're always scrambling to get the publication published and into your hands. But now it's a struggle more than ever. We're in somewhat of a tunnel, the depths of darkness reflected by people who have the power to determine your demise or your survival and with no matter what choice, demise or survive, they will enforce it by saying it's for the good of us. How can you combat something that's good for you? And furthermore, how can you disagree with preemptive agreements?

That's the tunnel. The flickering light that glimmers and helps us see our way through this blinding dark tunnel have been our volunteers as of late. They've come from various colleges all over the bay area. We've got volunteers from UC Berkeley, Stanford, UC Santa Cruz, and San Francisco State University. They are young motivated women who want to give back while out of school for the summer (and hopefully longer). And we couldn't be happier to have them especially since they came right on time.

There's no match to their dedication as they come in here with their laptops grab a unit or a letter from an adult prison and begin typing away. They discuss what they learned amongst themselves from reading your pieces and usually the discussion stems from how great your writings are. Some even go to workshops and facilitate while develop connections with you writers, because they feel like us, and know our society isn't doing exactly what it needs to be doing as far as furthering the next generation. And all of this for no pay at all, they are really volunteering.

This leads us to believe that the lives we lead are so endearing and exciting that sometimes they can act as rewards for others. For though, we're not here to entertain, instead we're here to teach, the lives we lead just happen to be filled with so many interesting experiences that while teaching, we're also entertaining. We connect two worlds that have always needed to be connected, yet because of fear or laziness, have never been bridged. The privileged need to be connected with the people who always seem to get the short end of the stick. That's how we break stereotypes and judgments, by coming together and sharing human experiences.

We can't express enough how grateful we are to work with a group of volunteers who are breaking the wall that separates the incarcerated and those who know nothing about incarceration. For while our own stereotypes tell us that people in college are only book smart and only have a heart for themselves and the immediate people around them, our volunteers, without knowing it, are breaking that stereotype we have about preppy colleges. Their dedication and perseverance are greatly appreciated. We just wish those that are still behind those blood, sweat, and tear stained walls could witness the beauty we have. The beauty of challenging judgments and coming together to offer a sense of community at a time when communities are being broken daily. Again, thank you to all the volunteers, we literally can't do it without you.

With that said, we couldn't be happier. We know if this publication is going to continue to touch as many lives as we have come to expect, then we're truly going to need the support of volunteers, 'cause the paying gig is not cutting it at this time. We hope over time that will change, but for now we'll take it one day at a time.

One thing for sure, we cannot wait until our powerhouse colleague and friend, Michael Kroll returns to the j-o-b this coming Monday. Michael has been out of the office for the last two weeks, and his absence sure has been felt. Having Michael in our presence is having great knowledge and wisdom that only an O-G like Michael can bring to the table. Those of you who know Michael, from the work in the office or those of you who know him from the workshops, are very fortunate, he is one of the true gems of The Beat Within. He's the elder we lean on, when times get hard. He is the storyteller when a good story is needed. He is the man who has been working as an advocate in the criminal justice system for many-many years. He is our friend and we love him, and we appreciate his incredible loyalty her brings to work each and everyday.

Summer is here, are you ready? We at The Beat Within are as ready as we can be. You ask, what's in store? Well, that's a good question. We hope it becomes a prosperous season for us all. Of course we will take our vacations here and there, but we'll also be hard at work getting the weekly publications out, doing the workshops, raising awareness in the community, and looking for funds to keep us all at peace. We hope to maintain this level of work, but you never know. Cut backs can still come our way, although we hope not.

On another note, as most of you writers outside of juvenile hall already know, we have stopped out monthly mailing for the time being, financial reasons, so the only way you will get a Beat publication is if you write a letter and request a Beat. With each letter request we will send you a Beat.

Moving right along, here's this week's topics, our first being "Adults Who Act Like Children" —Everybody here has been told to "stop acting like children" from time to time — even from The Beat staff! But is "acting like children" related to a person's age, or can anyone of any age sometimes act like a child? We all know young people who have adult responsibilities, and who live up to them. But do you also know grown up men and women who, despite their responsibilities, sometimes act like children? Have you ever said to yourself when observing some adults in action, "I can't believe how childish they're behaving!" So, give us some respectful examples of when adults act like children.

Our second topic, "If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes" -By taking a close look at yourself from the inside looking out, what is it that you see? Would you say that others who think they know you can see the same things you see? This week, we'd like you to tell us how you think others see you. Can you see yourself through the eyes of others, whether it's your parents, teachers, counselors, cops, PO, etc. It could even be that stranger who sees you in the street and pulls her purse closer to her, or follows you in that 7-11... What do others see when they look at you... and what do you wish they saw?

Lastly, the most popular, "Mother's Day" -What makes your mother better or worse than everybody else's?

We will leave you readers with thanks and praise for taking the time to flip through our publication. We want to especially give attention to you contributors who took the time to share a thought or two. Your contribution means plenty. IF you have any questions, thoughts or ideas on how to better our publication, program write us, we are so open to ideas.

This issue goes out to all the typist in our office who play a humongous role in getting the ball started each week when the writings come in after a night of workshops.

Thank you!

See you readers next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

MOM

My mom is one of the worst mom's out there because I was only ten when she came to me and told me when ever I want to try 'bud' to do it with her, and she's the one that got me to start smoking it at ten. Then before I realized what she was doing I started to get her stones and bud at eleven. Then when she was tweaking I would leave for weeks at a time and she wouldn't even know I was gone. That's how I started to get into trouble with the law and with gangs.

Then one night they raided my mom's house around three in the morning, when I was sleeping and they kicked me and told me I had to leave with a social worker because they were taking me away because they found a meth lab in the house and ever since I never saw my mom again.

That was almost seven years ago, and ever since I've been in and out of group homes, foster homes, shelters, jail, and rehab's. I got tired of it all so I always go on the run because I just want to live on my own already, but in the long run I have a little girl on the way and I am going to be the best dad there is. I will never let her go throw threw the things I went threw and saw. I say that is a promise.

-Michael

From The Beat: It's a sad thing whenever a story like this is told, but as you said your going to be the best dad there is. Follow your words, and break the cycle of drugs. Don't let your little girl live the life you have lived. Show her the better side of life, a life that your child deserves, and a life that you now deserve. Don't break that promise follow it to the end.

Mom's Day

My mom is better then every body else's 'cause she never left me even when she was at her bad. My mom is so nice, she gets what ever she want's from me and I get what ever I want from her.

I like spending time with my mom 'cause she is like one of the boys and that's cool 'cause I don't have to go any where, just stay home and chill with my mom or take my mom out to eat its nice being with my mom. When I am with my mom it feels like I don't have any problems and I like the feeling, and that's all I really got to say, beside's that I love her.

-Vincent

From The Beat: It's good you can spend time with your mother like this, and you should always love your mother. The most important thing to remember is that she's not one of the boys she is your mother. There will be time she tells you something you don't want to hear, and you should listen to her as your son and not as one of the boys. Cherish her love because she'll always give it with out a second thought.

A Day for Mom

People go through and say their mom's are cool, mean, or some time's they just don't care for their kids.

My mom's not like that she can't stand when her kids are gone, she can call 24/7, every five seconds of every day. My mom has a job that helps out the family but also supports us through the year, whether it be food, supplies, or even clothes. My mom knows what I'm doing before I do it. She's also pretty bad, she nags and whines she cries when I'm not home and when I'm not by her side.

I miss my mom and my mom misses me, but I call her when I can and see her at visiting, talk to her on her Birthday, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. But most of all I talk to her on Mothers day.

For mother's day is her day

-Spike E. Hare

From The Beat: In all seriousness Spike E. Hare, you shouldn't have to only talk to her on Birthday's, Christmas, Thanksgiving and Mothers day. Our mothers will support us through our life, but most of all they will nag and whine at us. They do this because they don't want their children to have a better life, a life with out looking behind bars. Make a change so you can be with her 24/7, she will do all she can to be with you 24/7.

My Mom

My mom, she lived a good life and she lived the bad. She thought she fell in love when she met my dad I guess he did not realize what he had. I know my mom misses my dad and the wonderful life that they had. When they broke up it hurt me bad, and made my little brother so sad. My mom does her best with out my dad.

I love my mom, she's so sad. She's never given up on me, with all the trouble I've had. I get locked up and she's there, it's like she pop's up out of thin air, for my mother on Mothers Day.

-Joe

From The Beat: Continue loving your mother, she will always be there for you no matter what you do. A mothers bond with her child is one that will be with her for the rest of her days. She will never give up on you no matter what life throws at you, but you must also do your part and be her son. As long as you return that unconditional love for her she will always be proud to call you her son.

Mom

My mom is better because she is one of the best person's I've meet in my life and me and her are like best friends, and I can talk to her about anything.

On Thanksgiving she can make the best food ever and her cherry pies are a taste of heaven. I just wish I could be with her and hold her in my arms because she makes me feel like, dam. She will do anything for me and try to teach me from right and wrong but I was a troublemaker, but she never gave up on me and taught me things that I've learned for life.

-Jose

From the Beat: Don't give up, cherish the memories you have, the pies and the love you have for her. Take the things she has taught you and use them in a positive way, a way to keep you by her side.

Adults Who Act Like Children

Everybody has been told to "stop acting like a child" from time to time, but do any of us think of how childish we are acting. We all do something childish at some point in our lives. Most of us are afraid to admit it, but it's true. Most of us are quick to criticize others for acting childish, but don't realize that we all act childish at some point in our lives and are being childish for criticizing others. It could be something as small as throwing a fit if we can't get our way. It could also be something as big as beating somebody up for not getting our way.

Being childish could also mean being stubborn rather then open minded about not letting your kids go out to the moves or a dance or something positive because you think that they will just end up in trouble.

Another way adults act like children is by being selfish or thoughtless or other people's feelings. Only thinking of ones self when they could easily help others, some other childish traits are anger and jealousy. It's a stupid and very childish to get angry. Anger only causes others to get angry and eventually violent. Jealousy only causes people to get angry.

In conclusion adults act like children by throwing fit's if they don't get their way. Also by being stubborn, selfish, thoughtless, and by getting angry or being jealous, but every body acts childish from time to time, so let's all just try to grow up a little

-Julian

From The Beat: As an adult it's good to be a little bit childish, but as an adult we must always remember there is a time and place for our childish out burst's. As a young adult or child we want to be grown up, and as an adult we find ourselves wanting to be a child again. Enjoy your child hood, because one day your going to grow older and at one point or another your going to want to be a child again. Just don't forget there is a time and place for it.

Why Can't I Save Myself?

"Dark Side, run
Them people is trying to get you!"
Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!
My heart starting to pound
I run away from my body
And I don't want to be found
"Slap" was the sound
Of the powerful force
That hit her
"Come on, J
We leaving. Let's go!"
It's cold outside
And I am only about six years old
Walkin' the street wit' nowhere to go
Ahhh, not another bad dream!
Them things trying to get me
Why can't I save myself?
Help!
No noise
Forget it
Gotta make it
It's too dark to see
So I jump to the next building
Gotta make it
Gotta make it
But this shhh is too real
I can't remember her face
I can't remember his face
Is this the end?
Jesus is in my heart
No, Devil! No, Devil!
Please, the pain is unbearable
I feel terrible
Have I lost the war?
Am I a slave?
Forever I'll always be wit' him
Will I ever see her again?
Is she alive?
Is she dead?
Please I need...
I need answers
Forget pain, pain, pain
Where is she?
Where is she?
Why, God, why?
Forget it
Pass me the blunt
Damn it
I said, pass me the weed
And the gun
Then shots go off
Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!
Click! Click! Click!
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a nightmare poem! Some enemies are trying to kill you, you outrun your own body, turn into an infant and jump to another building to escape. You must be exhausted, as well as exhilarated, when you finish writing these poems. Whose faces can't you remember? What war are you fighting? Who is trying to enslave you? Who is the "he" you'll be with forever? Your images morph from one into another, just like in a nightmare!

Acting Like a Child

My dad acts like a child because he couldn't take care of business and take care of his family so he just walked away and acted like a child.

-Chectos, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow. You say plenty in the one sentence. We're sorry your dad wasn't man enough to handle his responsibility. If anything we hope his lack of parenting will inspire only great things out of you, by not being like him!

My Situation

So basically I went to court today and seen my life as a criminal play like an award-winning movie in my brain. It made me think twice about my actions in the future. There is a lot that comes to my mind when I think of my responsibilities and my actions.

My lawyer showed me a video on Glen Mills School in Pennsylvania. It really got to me when I arrived in my cell and started wandering deep inside myself, looking for the answer to my life. There is this persuading little voice inside me that comes to me in my dreams, and it's almost like an angel is trying to save me and/or guide me though the right path. It's like it's trying to tell me something.

-Wonder Bread San Francisco

From The Beat: Oh yes, there is an angel's voice trying to guide you through these dangerous waters toward the opposite shore, if only you keep listening. We love the idea that you see your life as a moving picture and not a snapshot. That should tell you that you've only seen the beginning, the prologue. Where the movie goes from here is up to you, its writer, director and star. We like movies with happy endings.

In My Room

I think and think and think about life outside of jail walls, like my girl, ex-friends, family, money and what money can get me. Also, how I get money and the way other people get money.

I've done a lot in my life, good and bad. When I think of how I think now and how I used to think, I can see why the bad outweighs the good. I used to think grimy all the time, so when I did things, I didn't care about who was in my way or who got played. Now I think about becoming a better man.

How would my kids look up to me with me being on one all the time, poppin' pills and getting high. That's not how I want my kids to see me, when I have some. Also, I don't want my kids to ever see me in jail.

Some people think about getting out to do things that will bring them back. Me? I'm thinking of ways to keep me out.

-Marques San Francisco

From The Beat: This is such a positive and forward-thinking piece, Marques. You cannot undo the bad you have done, but you can overcome it by doing good, which is clearly your desire. You know, when college admissions offices look at high school records, they are less interested in what you did in the beginning that in the recent past and how it shows the direction you're going in. By that standard, you are going in the right direction, and that can only help you. Keep it up!

My Mom Used To Beat Me And Now She Beats My Little Sister

My mom is nothing but a slut. She does marijuana. She beat me when I was little. I'm the oldest. We were all living in one room and my mom beat me the most. She left the other kids alone because they were very little. I don't know where the rest of my brothers and sister are now. My mom has custody of the youngest.

Now that I'm living with my aunt, she (my mom) still isn't in jail. I have moved from foster home to foster home. She never gives a shhh about any of her kids, but when I beat the crap out of this one girl, I get arrested. That's messed up. Now she (my mother) is beating my other sister and no one gives a damn.

-Chastity, Marin

From The Beat: Thank you for your confidence in The Beat to express what's going on in your life. No one has the right to beat his/her kids, no matter what, and you do not have any right to touch anyone either! Right!? Why don't you talk to your counselor in the hall and tell them what you've just written. Regarding your sister, she may seriously need your help! You sound like you realize that if you beat someone up, that maybe you've learned to handle your anger with beatings, like apparently your mother does, and if so, you already know that's cruel, dangerous and wrong. You know how much beatings hurt physically and especially emotionally. How else can you deal with your anger, frustration and confusion, other than physically threatening or hurting someone?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Picture Perfect

Picture this
If the sky was purple
No emotions right now
So these shapes is circles
Ya, my wheels spinning
That joker always grinning
And don't dismantle my body
Like my brain
It's in separate pieces
Give me that iron
So I can get out all the creases
See, this is adult language
No beeps
It's just that
See, I don't wanna go to sleep
At least not yet
And if I am lost to the streets
Who will regret?
No family
So who will pay for my funeral?
And when I am dead
I hope my body remains beautiful
I get my inspiration
From the slits of her eyes
On the picture
But when the wind settles
And the dust is all gone
I really miss her
I hope my pop's soul
Is not burning right now
'Cause if he is
Then my heart
Need to be learning right now
His footsteps is what's
Gone lead me to death
And right now
I am at them stairs
I gotta jump these last three steps
Like Sponge Bob
I soak up everything
And I just married God
But he forgot the ring
And when I sin
It stings
I am not allergic
But I pledged the ring
I claim this thing
The light and the darkness
In a human being
The school's down
Getting chased with the smell of weed
On my seams
When I was younger
Herbs used to be on my team
Because the will to smoke is no more
Like pink in a cloak
It'll never happen
I quit shooting the dice
'Cause I was always crapping
I am starting to learn
How to pimp these words
They like prostitutes on the street
Except I turned 'em into verbs
My thought process is unspoken
And somebody just disturbed my talent
'Cause now the beat has been awoken
I got the devil in the palms of my hands
Think I should choke 'em
Or hang 'em by a tree
Put the string around his neck
And rope 'em
He feeling naked right now
Somebody clothe him

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: From your poem, you seem like your memory of your parents is haunting you. That's probably normal, especially with a whole lot of time and quiet to think about things. But you sound like you're so alone on the outs. You never write about what your real daily life on the outs is like, so our only impression of you is through the visions you present in your poems. How do you manage on the outs? Who do you live with? Do you go to school? Play sports? Have a job?

The Stranger

I am starving
He left me all alone
In my new home
I am walking the streets with the stranger
He sees the guy sleeping
He tries to take it
But the guy has a knife
The stranger yells
"Put Jay in the car"
I scream, "Stranger, Stranger, Stranger"
He's gone
My friend
This is the end
I'm trapped in a place
But my soul's not there
I am stressing
So I am pulling on my hair
I can hear his thoughts
I can feel him grow inside of me
Stranger
That stranger is me
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Brilliant poem. When you write "he" left you all alone, do you mean you left yourself alone down here, or in the world? Sometimes we become strangers to ourselves, especially when we think and do things we ordinarily wouldn't do, but our fear, loneliness, confusion, fury, hurt, can take over and we become the stranger we dread. You seem to thoroughly know the dark side.

What I See In Me. . .

I see a young beautiful lady with pretty eyes, holding her head up high! She's been through pain, but she still gains control of herself. What is she about? Her education. What she do for a living? Is her boyfriend treating her right? She looks bright and smart. She don't look happy. What's wrong? I wish I could walk up to her say hi, and make her smile. Actually, I am.

Her name is Lucero. She don't have a boyfriend, but she's very sad, 'cause her brother's locked up. She goes to school. She's nice. She's gang affiliated. She don't look like it. She's very beautiful, smart, with goals. She could do better, but it's pain and being alone that got her like that. She wants to be a basketball player. I could help her. She only lives with her mom. She's been locked up. But at this point, she's at YGC, and this is what I see, and this is what they see in me.

Yes, I'm in jail, and I want to know what you guys see in me? What you think about my writing.

-Lucero San Francisco

From The Beat: We see a beautiful lady who has a lot of soul and compassion for everybody else. We can see that you're sad about your brother being locked up and maybe about other personal confusions. Sometimes you seem to have lost your way. What do you want for yourself? You're always thinking about your family, your homies, but what about you? You have so many talents (so clear from your writing), and we have to confess that we are worried that those talents will be squandered on a gang lifestyle, which too often leads to dead ends (sometimes literally). Becoming a basketball player is a worthwhile goal, but one that depends on a solid educational foundation, and still only rarely leads to making a living. So, what other goals do you have, and what are doing to prepare for them? What's your long-range plan?

She could do better, but it's pain and being alone that got her like that.

Goodbye

Hey Beat, I get out tomorrow. I am finally off probation. I hate to say but I am going to leave the gang life behind I have stuff going for me. I'm going to graduate on time. I don't wont to be messed up in life. I spend my teen years locked up.

I sure as hell ain't planning to spend my adult years locked up. I am going to be nineteen in five months. I am going to get a job, go to school and give back to the community. For those who know me and think I can't do it. Guess again.

Well Beat got to go...

-Marissa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Beautiful. We do hope this is still the case and that you are striving for a better future. We assume you are now on your way to college, high school grad! What about this summer? What kind of work will you be doing in your community? Stay in touch!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Pain

I feel you in the dark, when I'm alone
Or when my eyes are suddenly shut
I can't see but I sense you
I reach out and touch air
Nothing's there
Am I nuts?
Yelling out in dismay
Who are you?
Where are you?
What's your game?
I get a reply with a sharp bang
Pain, a demon with my name
A bat hanging vertically
In the deepest, darkest depths of a cave
In silence, in thought
Drowning in an unstoppable wave
Intricately woven in the threads of my being
Pulsating with the rhythm that my heart is freeing
Dwelling the unsaid words of my soul's pleading
Unbearable pain, pain, pain
It's happening
You're there
There's no threat or retreat like a predator ripping into flesh
Tearing into meat
So does your mind, body and soul feel maimed?
There's no care
A reluctant effort
It can't be tamed

-Young Hitters San Francisco

From The Beat: Except for the space we provide for you to express your emotions and, it is hoped, help relieve some of what you're feeling, there is little we can do to remove your pain. But we can say this: Some of the greatest art ever produced, whether in literature, painting or music, has been forged through the desperate pain of the artist. What you have created here is art, pure and simple. That may not make you feel any better, but it helps us and it helps the world.

To Whom it May Concern

A lot of people have come into our lives that have promised many things. Some have come through, but many more have not. They say things like "we'll help you," "you can count on us," but most people you can't really depend on.

But sometimes you encounter people who really are reliable, that always seem to come through with their promises. ONE of those are all the people from The Beat Within writing program..

I have been knowin' these people from The Beat for over a year now, since March 1st, 2006.

Before I ever met Dave or Allen, I really didn't know I could be a writer. I always felt untalented, but they gave me the motivation to be a writer. They helped me change my ways and my thinking and helped me see the future that I really have.

-Big Vick, Alameda

From The Beat: We just supplied you the tools and the outlet to see the light. The Beat is not rocket science. It is a program that prides itself on being consistent. It is a program that encourages young writers and thinkers to find their voices and to have the courage to write, and that you have done. You have been open with us from day one Vick, thank you, and by being open with us, you, and you alone have created some of the most memorable pieces ever written in The Beat Within, thank you. Until the next piece!

I reach out and touch air
Nothing's there
Am I nuts?

Corruption Is Me . . .

Corruption with life that stopping me from being free
Show me a better life so I can start opening doors with my key
Hurt so many people but didn't expect to be all alone
This corruption life I'm living alone
I'm contacting my heart for a sweeter side
My corrupted side was always ready to ride
I dream everyday that I wish I would die
And my corrupted mind tells me it's a lie

I used to hurt those that I love for my friends
They loved me but I had corrupted plans
Doing things without thinking
My corrupted behavior had me sinking
Is I'm gone change the corruption of my life?
Yes 'cause I'll be nice

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: Describe a better life for us Papa! What is it like to be alone in the system waiting your fate? As for finding the sweeter side to your life, we know by doing so you will find peace. We're pulling for you as you continue to teach us through your thoughtful poetry.

Her Story

Quiet, no words.
Nothing to say.
She sees so much it scares her.
She's young doesn't know what to do.
She keeps it to herself one day telling the wrong people.
Telling her story her life and the life she had and still has.
Wishing for a better one. Still not telling her whole story.
People feel sorry for her and that's not the reaction intended.
That's why she never said anything before.
Now she's wishing she never said anything,
wishing she waited longer and told the right people.

-Sierra, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one powerful piece of writing. You don't say much, but you say plenty. Speaking for all readers, we'd love to hear more from you on what you have seen and experienced when the time is right.

The Other Day

The other day I cried so hard
I wanted my mom so bad
I was wishing she would talk to me
I want her to tuck me into bed at night
I want to hear her pretty voice sing
I want her to hold my hand to cross the street
I need her to get by everyday throughout these struggles I have
I want to see her face, how warm her smile was
I want to lay next to her and feel her warmth,
I would love a big bear hug she used to give me
I want to here her say "I love you Dannie"
I want her here for Thanksgiving and Christmas
I miss her too much that words can't even describe
The pain I feel from her not being here
It's a pain I go through everyday
It's a pain so strong that it's unbearable
I want my mom so bad and need her love,
Please give her back to me.

-Danielle, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: The loss of someone we are connected to in a deep way can be excruciating! You will continue to grieve the loss of your mother throughout your life in bits and pieces. The people we care for the most may be taken too soon, but in loving and being loved we are who we are, transformed in some unexpected way. You know your mother has touched your life in special ways and those gifts she has given you are what we encourage you to focus on when you feel her absence. Our hearts break at your sadness and we wish we could hold you in a tender embrace and soothe you. Danielle...you are such a beautiful person and we hope that you will continue to use writing to share your heart.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Ghetto

The ghetto is a place where nothing's ever mellow
Where people say, "what it do" instead of saying, "Hi"
Where the poor and the lost grow cold
Where guns are shot and drugs are sold
Where the cats chase the rats and the dogs chase them all
From the crack in the sacks to the knocks tryin' to ball a tennis shoe on the phone pole
Spray paint on the wall
laughing children with their snotty noses and the stains on their drawers mothers on welfare
Three kids gotta share, five sleep in the bed
The other in the chairs
Underneath there's suffering
Hurting
Real pain on the street it's occurring
Minds twirling insane for the friend
With the addictions their life is a shame
Scream at the children their wife is to blame
They want it so much they'll do anything for cocaine
They're on it so much they forget their own name
You can run but you can't hide only some escape some sold drugs and bought their way out
Some showed love and some fought their way out
Some found family and thought their way out
But one day everything will be all settled
One-day things will be all cool in the ghetto.
That's how I feel about the ghetto. I love my family and I love my mom. You Feel Me

-Lil' New New, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an amazing poem – because you show everything that's wrong with the ghetto, all the ways poverty and violence destroy lives, but you write with such love that the we also see the ghetto a different way: It's home, and like all homes, it needs taking care of. One day, as you say, and with a little help from people who care, we hope that "things will be all cool in the ghetto"

Why

Why are things so hard, and the life I live I want to get far.
So much to do but yet so hard,
the best time in my life is when I was ten.
Why I say that, 'cause I was on my own,
but I really was on my own at eight but at ten years old
I had money in my pocket.
I rob people, why, cause I was sad, mad,
did not have nobody but me.
I ask myself "why?"
Why God?
What did I do wrong for my life to be messed up?
I was sellin',
I was a hustler getting' my money
like all the boys in the hood.
I never knew my daddy
he die when I was a baby
my mom didn't care too much about me.
The only person that helped me from time to time
was my aunt "D,"
it was hard growin up in the halls.
Sometimes I dream I am back in the hood
or at my girl's house
then I wake up and see these walls.
I know it happened to y'all be'fo',
to all of us,
I be like "Why?"

-K-Marr, Alameda

From The Beat: What a sad piece you deliver Marr. There isn't much for us to say except we are glad you have the courage to tell us your reals and that you, we hope, are ready and willing to move on from this institution to pursue a better life. WE also hope to hear more from you in future issues. You have plenty to share!

Stop Acting Like a Child!

Today I'm going to talk about adults who act like children! I think that when people act like little kids it means that they are used to being babied around. When you don't have to do anything, you are used to goofing off all of the time.

My take on juvenile hall having an impact with this topic is: 1, to goofing off all the time. My take on juvenile hall having an impact with this topic is growing up locked inside eventually teaches you to be humble. When you come to juvenile hall, a lot of times it is for some little kid shhh, like walking drunk or failing probation because you smoked some bomb.

Me personally, I have grown up a lot in here because my first time in here I was sort of immature. I've been coming here for a few plus years and it is finally time for me to stop acting like a child. All this smoking dank, fighting, drinking, selling, partying, coming home late or not at all is hella old. Everyone needs to grow up sometime! I'm not saying I'm gonna quit gangbanging but if I'm gonna do something it's going to be organized and only if the funk comes to me.

I'm kind of in a messed up situation though because when I get out I want to go to college full time. Only problem is I only have ten months to stack as much money as possible. I feel as though I need to slang to get what I need to be focused on school, not a dead-end job. It's kind of like I got to do some dumb shhh that I know may get me locked up again, just so I can get somewhere in life.

Yeah I kind of got off track but I got a good example for this topic. My dad was released from prison after sixteen-years, less than one week ago. I got a visit today from my mom describing what it is like in his house right now. His dad, my grandfather, who knows how old he is, is an alcoholic, his brother is in jail, and his other brother is all messed up on drugs. I don't know about my grandma but it really seems that they need to wake up. It's kind of late, but that's acting like a child for sure 'cause they are all just worried about what they want and only what they want, like a little kid in a candy store. I don't know but they need to grow up and I do too, because I want more than these brick walls for my life.

-Nick, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Excellent commentary on our topic, and you courageously put it out there about how you see in your own family how one acts as a child when they should be focused on handling their responsibilities like adults. Sounds to us like you are on the road to recovery and you know what you want and don't want, good for you.

Dear Mr. Dwight Abbott

My name is Michael, and I'm incarcerated here at YGC, now called JJC (Juvenile Justice Center).

First of all, I like to say that I'm sorry that you had to experience the things you experienced.

I have been incarcerated here for about eleven months. Now I am waiting to be transferred to CYA. I came in here for armed robbery. I read your book three times now; my therapist encouraged me to read it. I learn something new every time. I also read your articles in The Beat Within and they are very positive. I wish I would have listened to my parents too.

I'm sorry about what happened to Stubby too. Mike from The Beat told me what happened. He said you guys are good friends.

I just basically I wrote this letter to tell you thanks for your advice. Your words had an impact on my life. I have a one-year-old son and I don't want him to grow up like I did. So I wanted to tell you thank for your wisdom you shared.

P.S. Look for me in The Beat. Please write back. I like to hear what you say.

-Young Jokes San Francisco

From The Beat: This is such a heartfelt letter, Young Jokes. It moved us very much, and we know it moved Mr. Abbott even more, because we have read his personal reply to you (which we have forwarded to you at your new temporary "home" at the SF County Jail). We know that others have also been deeply affected by Mr. Abbott's experience and wisdom, but too few of them take the time, as you did, to write and say thank you. For that we say, Thank you.

Entry Two — The Beat Goes On

And The Beat goes on
Still moving strong on and on

On and on my respect
For The Beat
Out of kindness they come here to meet
Meet us criminals
'Cause nobody else knows
Knows that us expressin'
Ourselves through a weekly paper
Is coo' 'cause no they ain't no hater

The Beat goes on
The Beat goes on
The Beat goes on.... Ooooh oooh

The Beat goes on,
On and on
On and on never off
Never in the wrong direction
Always fittin' in with our affection
No matter what complexion
Set us in that right state of mind
Tryin' to help us find, find
The light 'cause the fight
For us ain't right

And The Beat goes on
Still movin' strong on and on
The Beat goes on
The Beat goes on.... Oooh oooh
Like my lovin' everlastin'

Everlastin' The Beat goes on
Even if they do get gone
Get on
We all still will
We won't dare fall
'Cause The Beat
Made us strong
And if you're strong
You will live long

Everlasting
The Beat goes on
The Beat goes on
The Beat goes on.... Oooh oooh
Just like my love
Everlasting-

-Jonathan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, what a great song you deliver in the name of The Beat Within. We are honored. Sounds to us like you Jonathan are on the road to recovery and living a life far away from incarceration. Bravo! You have our support. As for The Beat and it's next chapter, only time will tell. You know the demand is high, yet the funds are low, but we believe in the end we will gain the support we need to continue this incredible program that has touched so many young people over the years.

Lost In The Game

I'm lost in this game
I feel so insane
I feel dazed out
I got kicked out
I drink
I get blazed out
I get into fights
Just about to die
And end up in a coma in 2002
I'll wake up still not giving a damn
Now I shoot up
Now I'm living in the streets
Nowhere to be found
But only underground, damn,
I didn't know so many people cared

-Angie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Now that you know people care, what are you going to do to help yourself? How did it get to this point? We hope this is your bottom, and now you are picking yourself up!

In My Mind

Sometimes I lay in bed and think... you know, about killings, drugs, etc...How long will it last until there are no more drugs to sell and people to kill. Then will there be world peace, or will the next generation continue it?

A lot of innocent children have been killed in the streets who have done nothing wrong... that's why I write these words of sorrow and sadness. If this doesn't end it will be madness.

I don't know why we live this way, the life of crime, it only adds a piece to the violence. If I wasn't incarcerated I'd be smilin', enjoyin' all the days to come with my girl and my family, but all this is for a reason I guess.

Gangs are really the root of it all. sometimes big, sometimes small. We all add a piece of this violence, don't know why, we just do what we do.

-Lonnie, Alameda

From The Beat: This incredibly wise piece started out as an essay and then turned into a poem – or maybe a song... it was like being in church, when people sing a sad song or lament to share and lighten their sorrow. Do you think this sadness you describe will help motivate you to turn your back on street life, or do you think that once you get out you might become lost in it again?

The Pain Deep Within His Eyes

If I could see myself through their eyes, I would see an intelligent young man. I would see a man who's been through a lot, and would see the pain that's buried deep within his eyes. I would see a man who's tired of being incarcerated and tired of being told what to do continuously.

If I could see myself through my homeboys' eyes, I would see a young G who's dedicated to the gang. I would also see loyalty, respect and honor.

If I could see myself through my mother's eyes, I would see a young, innocent man who's struggling and needs help and attention.

If I could see through the police's eyes, I would see a gang member who's gonna amount to nothing, a man who threw away his life to the gang.

If I could see myself through my teacher's eyes, I would see a man who wants his education, wants to be someone important.

I wish I could see myself through God's eyes. I would see a man who's a hard worker, and has great potential, also heart.

If I had a chance, I would see myself through my family's eyes, because I care what they see in me, and I want them to be proud of me. I want them to know that I'm struggling, too. I'm hurting. I just want them to see that I'm a better man than when I came in juvenile hall. Damn, I really want them to see a young man who's not going to rob them, hurt them, lie, or cause them pain in their lives.

Well, Beat, this king's gotta go—stay up!

-Raul, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Beautiful commentary Raul. You are no longer in the hall, but we do hope you find the time to write us so we can forward this thoughtful commentary to you so you can share with your family. We believe in you too! And from what we see in our eyes we saw a young man with incredible potential to be much more than a detainee in the criminal justice system.

From Their Eyes

What up Beat? Well if I saw myself from someone else's eyes they would see a no-good jail bird! A gang member with a eye patch and a pirate hat on. I would see a boy who has givin' up hope for his family and himself. I would see a boy who lost his feelings because he can't do anything right. The only hope he would have is gang life. That's what I would see if I was staring at myself through their eyes.

They see that on the outside of me, but the inside remains clueless to those people who judge me. I love the life I live I still got feelings and try hard at what I do. So just 'cause they see me one way on the outside don't mean I'm like that on the inside.

Well I'm gone for now till next time. Love to all.

-Outlaw, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Tragically you deliver a very insightful piece. It is quite interesting that's how you think you are seen from others. Now tell us how did it get to the point of losing feelings and giving up hope for family as well as self? You know you have the answers, and if you want to correct some of these problems you can, but as long as you love the life that brings you in front of a judge, that puts you in a cell and a system that has a file on you, well then sadly your living a life you love.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Tell Me What You See

Hey Mr. Beat this is yo' boy Dirty U.
Many people spend their whole lives trying to find out who they really are
or what their purpose is in life or even where they belong.
They look at others and are so quick to judge,
they don't even "try" to take the time to get to know some people.
They say to themselves, he's a gangster,
she's a stuck up B.
Or this person or that person is a bad person,
or sometimes it's the other way around, he's a square,
that fool's a J-cat,
he's ugly, I
heard that he said that and she said that
he said, Bla, Bla, Bla, Bla, you feel me though,
we all know that lot of people do it too.
It's not just the rich people or the white people or even the authority figures
that have a badge. It's a whole bunch of heads that do it.
People that judge me sort of say this…
aww that fool's a gangster,
or I heard that fools a JC,
or he's a square,
or he's a tweeker,
or he's a dumb retarded lookin mutha sucka,
or he's coo',
or he's a wetback,
or he's a nobody just another B.
the truth about me is that I'm the kind of person that walks down the street
coo' with everybody, but quick to flip the script, and that's exactly what I did.
I used to put in work and always down to ride with a lot of different homies
from a lot of different hoods. But never bragged about any of it.
Always kept to myself but easy to get a long with,
everybody I ever ran into always had the utmost respect for me.
The people I used to ride on, I never even knew 'em
they were my homegirls or my homies' enemies.
Now I feel really bad for those people, my homies and their enemies,
I knew back then I was going to hell
but now I'm going to heaven.
So all I want is for people to see me as a Christian.
That's why I flipped the script 'cause I'm a Christian.

-Dirty U, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You deliver truths when it comes to all people judging others. We do hope some of us can do a better job in keeping our traps shut. WE are happy to hear about your latest revelations and that God and Christianity is now playing a role in your life. How did you find God? What did it take to make religion a major part of your life?

Dear Mr. Beat

I am sorry The Beat is broke, but I have a good idea. You should take this financial problem to the media. You should have someone explain what The Beat is and how very important it is to all of us here, and in all the other counties. We need this.

Please Beat, I look forward in seeing The Beat every week. I am very sad and hurt that you won't be here anymore. This is not fair, and I really think if everyone saw this people would donate money.

Thank you.

-Tess, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Not a bad idea Tess, we'll talk to the San Jose Mercury this week! That may have to be the case. As for now, we are hoping we can continue to serve you and the community the way most of you have come to expect.

Miserable Cocaine Drug Lord

The true unexpected youngsta is going to jail
Escaped the hood so his life fails
Raised by nothing but cocaine drug lord
They sold drugs 'cause the things they wanted they couldn't afford
Speaking through the power of the city
Ridin late night in a black hoodie off pills so he ain't with that pity
Higher than that birds flying in the sky
Anybody cross the line then they goodbye
The young general of his hood gang
OG's respected this youngster so they let him bang
He's about satisfying drugs money and power
Killing by the day and hour
Knowing his day of death will come real soon
Asking when he die he hope he live on the moon
Forgivness isn't in this deadly youngsta's blood
So he killing people leaving them in they own blood flood
This is the view of my brother from the hood who is gone
Rest in peace 'cause you ain't coming back home
Rest in love Wayne Gordon 1988- 2006

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: We too knew Wayne, who went by the name King Yella, who resided in the same unit (old 3) you write from. He too was a good writer, sadly you inform us of his passing. RIP. We hope you and others who read your piece will see the tragedy in the lifestyle too many young men glamorize.

A Bad Court Date

My heart was pounding as I walk that cold hallway to court, thinking in my mind that something good has to finally happen.

Finally my name is called and I walked inside and see my mom's sad eyes meet mine.

I turn around with a tear in my eye and look at the judge for his ruling. My mind racing, thinking that something good gone happen, finally.

Then his words hit me hard like bullets ripping my chest apart, "Five-years-four-months" was his words to be exact.

I turned around to see my mom crying, like every tear from her body was coming out. I blew a kiss to my mom and say "don't worry mom everything gone be ok…."

-Big Boi, Alameda

From The Beat: Your piece says plenty about what many of our writers are experiencing. At first, for many the system is a big joke, as one gets chance after chance to live a good life back home, then in the end when the judge runs out of options you're facing hard time in the CYA or worse prison, reality really hits hard. Not sure how things in your life got to this point, but we do hope you make the best of your sentence and experience so you never fall prey to incarceration again.

Entry Three - It's Funny

It's funny how I walk through a store, expecting to be starred or followed.
It's funny how I can't walk alone minding my own business in a public place.
Is it my race?
Is it my clothes?
It's funny how these people don't know, but already assume I bring harm.
I mean look it, walk it sometimes talk it but never to their face.
They've never seen me, heard me but I have no problem
I just think about if they in fact haven't ever watched anyone and they did in fact do something hmmm…. I wonder.

-Jonathan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is life, too many people are so quick to judge, as long as you are comfortable with who you are, you'll be fine.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

By Being In Here, I've Let My Mother Down

My mom to me is one of the greatest persons in the world. It is said that you realize the value of something when it's gone. Well, Beat, I know exactly how that feels...

A mother's love is unconditional and I know that from my mom. No matter what I put her through, no matter how much I hurt her, she's still there. I've yelled at my mom, sworn at her, and walked out of the house on her. I get locked up and that same mother uses her lunch breaks to come and see her son.

Today's my birthday, Beat. I turned seventeen and worse than it feels for me, my mom is about to come in about fifteen minutes to see me. The same son whom she brought into this world seventeen years ago, has made her have to take an appointment to see on his birthday.

She has been there through all my good times, but also stood by me for my rough ones. I know one thing—no matter what happens and no matter who leaves me, I know I can count on my mom being there.

Now The Beat asks me to say why my mom is better or worse than others. Well, I can't, because no one can explain how great or loving a mother is. To me, my mom is the greatest, just because I know she loves me, no matter what. By being in here, I've let that mother down. All the times I've been a jerk to her come back and haunt me now. I'm just lucky that my mom is still here and I can make it up to her.

I got court tomorrow and hopefully I get out, but even if I don't, when I do get out, I'm going to be a better son. I want to make that very mom feel proud to have me as her son. I want this Mother's Day to be the last one that leaves tears in my mom's eyes. I love you, mom, and I promise to be a better son and make you happy.

-Abu, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well friend, you are free, so we anticipate an y update from you on how the two of you are doing. Your mom is special, and in truth that's what moms are all about when it comes to their children. We hope you in the end make her proud. Tell us the news!

So Much

I want to get the heck out of here
All dried up can't even bust a tear
So much crap is goin' on in my life
So much that sometimes I want that knife
Why does it always happen to me?
It's too much God don't you see?
I'm drowning deep into all this pain
It's me. I'm going completely insane.
All of this is driving me up the wall
It's really far and hard when I fall
My life is turning into such a mess
I'm slowly dying from so much stress.
Why can't some of this stuff wait?
There's so many things I really hate
All I do is write poems all day
Sitting here hoping I'll soon find my way
I always feel so...so...lost
Isn't there a plane ticket to heaven-
How much will it cost?
All I need is one more chance to get my life on track
This isn't a lie it's a well-known fact
I'm really gonna do it this time
'Cause my sobriety isn't worth a dime
Just tell myself "I got this"
I'm really trying to be with my sis
I'm just gonna do what I got ta do
'Cause deep down inside I want this too.

-Danielle, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Sometimes we are so busy asking questions and looking for answers, that we do not hear the answers when they come. Slow down and allow the answers to come. You say that your sobriety isn't worth a dime...do you mean it is priceless or not worth the battle? We believe sobriety is a key to your freedom, but you will also need to find constructive, empowering ways to face and work through your sadness and frustrations. Writing is one avenue you can use, even on the outs. Take the time to write wherever you are to release and possibly even work through the events with which you are struggling.

My Past, My Mom

As a young boy I never listened to moms
So I never got to make it to my high school prom
A young playboy, girls said I had charm
Switched up, females liked the sleeves on my arms
All about my fetti so I had to be fitted
But then I caught a case that couldn't be acquitted
Now I'm in this room makin' beats on my wall
Stay manipulating staff for a straight through phone call
Might call the hood and get an update on them
Then I talk to my girl which makes me shine like a gem
A phone call and mail means a lot while I'm down
Reminiscin' 'bout my past makes me want to frown
I was rebellious decided to go against the grain
Got a lil' liquor in me then tried that Mary Jane
It was over after that, the beginning of the end
I was livin' life without a care, no need to pretend
The streets was my only real friend
I guess I was just one to follow the trend
But now I'm sittin' here wishin' I would of paid attention
Maybe this wouldn't of happened if I went to detention
All the stupid things I did makes me always regret
So I say sorry mom for showin' you disrespect

-Big Vick, Alameda

From The Beat: Live and learn and that you have. We bet in your heart right now you will never ever put yourself or your mother through the pain you are experiencing now. You know the problem, and now is the time to address your ills and make them right. No time to chill, now is the time to prepare for tomorrow, even from your jail cell!

My Mom . . .

My Mom makes the best fudge, and she is not here for me but when she calls she tells me she loves me.

My mom left when I was two, or should I say, we left her because she was doing drugs. Hardcore real drugs. And my dad didn't like that around the family.

I miss my mom and I worry she is not safe and might OD off of diesel

This is a little personal, but I'll let you in on my story. Well, my mom was in a rehab program when I was in the sixth grade and she was sober for one year straight. And when the year ended she passed program.

She had her own apartment for three months, and one month she told me she was moving out to a new apartment so I can live with her. Well anyways she packed all of her things and moved our of her old one room apartment. So I thought I can live with her, but then I didn't hear from her for a month and when I heard form her she was back on drugs.

So yes I was very mad at her. I thought everything was going to be all right. But she was back on the dope spot. So from then on I lost hope on her being sober, but I still love her to death.

-Huero Eyes, Alameda

From The Beat: There's so much loss and heart and love in this piece, it's hard to know where to start. Young kids want and need their parents to be the ones worrying about them, teaching them to walk, talk, sheltering them from dangers in the world, and here you were, barely able to walk yourself, and it was understood that your mom was in so much trouble herself that you had to be worrying about her safety. That's a wild way to grow up... topsy turvy. But what's really powerful about this piece is that you seem to have forgiven your mother for that, you could have opted for rage or hate, yet you choose love. That takes a lot of strength and courage.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Thoughts

I think every day about when I'm getting out
I daydream my brother getting killed
I dream me being an angel
All I do is draw in my room
I sense a lot of smart, intelligent girls around me
I see my mom with tears and pain in herself
I could get out and do better
I wish I had a respectful boyfriend
Who will love me and care about me and be there for me
I wish my brother was out
I wish my family could be reunited
I wish I wasn't in this world
I play ball
I love to help others
I love to learn
But I want to be a guardian angel
And save my mother's life and protect her!

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you step up, Lucero, you step up big! We hate that you wish you were not in this world because we know this world would be a worse place without you in it. All the people you want to help (and who deserve your help) gain nothing if you do not help yourself first. It's like a mother's relationship to her child. Although she wants everything for her child, if she allows herself to get sick — or worse — how can she help her child? You are your first priority. Don't let yourself down.

Troubled Souls

Conflict within our troubled souls
Forgotten our dreams, hopes and goals
Guns are loaded. Now the violence begins
But why are we fighting when no one can win?
Who are the victors, the men who survived?
Are they winners just because they're alive?
Who are we constantly fighting, when no one can win?
Who are the victors, the men who survived?
Are they winners just because they're alive?
We were constantly fighting or arguing it seems
Over different beliefs and different dreams
Harmony and peace seem hard to obtain
Upon each other? I wish we could see
How much peace would mean just for someone like me.

-Keeyana, Alameda

From The Beat: This is such a beautiful poem, especially because peace can be so hard to imagine... like, what would peace look like? Would it mean green lawns by the schools, mothers pushing their babies down strollers without worry, no matter what time of day it is? Would it mean clean schools, a lot of laughter? We know what it wouldn't mean: No gunshots, funerals, tears, fights. No mean-mugging. People wouldn't have to travel in packs so much. No smashed windows. No late night sirens. What can we do – you, me, the readers of The Beat – do to bring in that peace?

Movin' Too Fast . . . Time Is Clicking

What have I become
Being handcuffed and a 40 cal. to my head
I've had it all. I had a ball
Had bikes and toys, played outside and went to school
By second grade I felt unsure, a disease I couldn't cure
I didn't realize it was there, but my actions led me here
YGC, my home for the past four years
It's no sense to how I became lost in this world
Can't speak my tongue
This isn't me, but this is my actions, you see
My life traveled at the speed of light
An awkward scene, but what is right?
Hiding my frustration for way too long
I feel confused, don't know how to act
So I let my feeling slip and react
Before you know it, I get into crime
Left and right is a chance for another dime
11 years old got caught up and brought to YGC
This place was no fun; back on the street, right on the run
I hopped in car driving aimlessly, but I'm just having fun
"Couple more cars, and that will be all..." I'm sure I said that before
I mean, I got a chance for some money, too,
Thoughts like that come out the blue
My pops keeps trippin', mom keeps beggin'
But all I do is to do it moving
I was such a fool, now sitting in tha hall for my 8th time
Looking at some time at a quarter of my life
This stuff ain't tight

-Alex, San Francisco

From The Beat: Man, your piece touched us. You write with a passion. We strongly encourage you to keep writing. You're right, handing away years of your life to a bunch of uncaring strangers is foolish, but that doesn't mean that you are a fool. You aren't, so don't convince yourself that you are. Instead, concentrate on the gifts that you so obviously possess, and which potentially can move you away From The kind of foolish choices that lead here (or worse) and towards a life of freedom and positive movement — movement that not only can benefit you, but all of us. What is a solution to prevent another young kid from going down the same road that you traveled? What is your own path to salvation (not that we're asking you to become a saint, just a free adult)?

I know I got a lot of people who hate on me, but I love it though. It brings attention.

Judge Me . . . You Probably Right

I know damn well that when people look at me, they already thinkin' I'm a gangsta. Well, in reality, they already know. Yeah, I is, and I'ma tell you that I'm one, I have no shame. If people wanna judge me, go ahead. Just don't ever think I'ma sucka, though. If a person wants to point me out and say, "He a gangsta," I ain't mad; they right.

I'm not finna change the way I dress and act just to please someone I don't know, on top of that, one who don't know me. I be on the bus loud, on the street hyphy, and if I don't like you, I'ma tell you. If you think I'm rude for it, I don't care, that's me.

I know I got a lot of people who hate on me, but I love it though. It brings attention. I know I'm in a lot of ninjas' mouths too, but that's good. Put my name out there. I just know that no matter what they talking 'bout, I know they ain't sayin' I'm soft. Usually, they just talkin' 'bout how I played them and how they wanna get me. Nothing too violent.

Really, thinking of what others think about me neva cross my mind. I don't care. I'ma be me. I ain't eva finna change for anyone. If my first impression on you is a troublemaker, good, 'cause I find makin' trouble fun. I do find it annoyin' how security be on me at the Safeway though ,but best believe I'ma get on his head. And I dress the way I do for reason... " I sag my pants and wear tall tees to let people know how I grew up, bein' less fortunate, wearin' clothes that didn't fit me is all that I knew of!

-Savioso, San Francisco

From The Beat: André thanks for your honesty. How do you imagine yourself in five years? Do you see yourself as being productive or destructive?. If the world sees you as a "gangsta," are you willing to accept everything that comes with it, like jail time, stress, possibly getting shot (paralyzed?), possibly getting killed? You say you like the attention your style and your behavior give you, so are you happy with the attention you're getting now? When you say you "ain't eva finna change," you reveal how young your thinking is (as it should be). But we can promise that you will change, which you will discover as you mature, because change is guaranteed with living. The question is only a matter of how much you will direct the changes that will inevitably come, or whether those changes will come at the hands of others (strangers). You have a lot of confidence, which we like, but we hope you use that same energy in a way that still leads to attention, but in a positive way. All leaders get attention, but great leaders get the most. Think about it.

Behind Jail Doors

being behind these locked doors ain't cool
for a teenager.
being in jail
take away your freedom
your rights
it lowers your vocabulary,
i've been in here for two months
i'm starting to stress getting restless
i can't wait to i go home
i can be with my friends and family members
having fun and living life as a teenager again.
everybody had a vision of being behind bars
like me i knew i was going to see this place
guess what happened i'm in here right now
writing the beats from within.
they built this jail on purpose
because more schools are getting closed
jails are opening for teenagers.
i hate being behind bars
you are ordered around like a slave
they tell you when to wake up, eat,shower, go to school,
and got to sleep.
every morning and night i pray
to god
i'm starting to change my life around
i think god sent me here for a reason
so i can stop doing bad and start doing good.
i made a commitment in life to finish igh school
just to make my mom proud.
but being here teaches me how to be young a man
since i didn't grow with a dad.
later on in my life i want to become an aircraft mechanic
so i can prove to these white people that blacks ain't dumb
i can accomplish things in life.

-Get It How You Live, Alameda

From The Beat: Who ever thinks you're dumb, hasn't read this piece you delivered this week! We hear you loud and clear about changing for the better and we so believe you are on the right path. Glad to ehar that this experience is exactly what you needed to see clearly!

Money Can't Buy This Love

My mother I think is better than others, because she always tried to talk to me and even though I'm locked up she always comes to see me and tells me "It's OK, I still love you and always will." My mom also tried to give me what I want, but I never wanted nothing that I know she can't give me.

There was this one time I told her that I was going to start saving my money to buy something and the next week she just gave me like 200 dollars and I kept trying to give it back to her but she would not take it back. She wanted me to get what I wanted, but I couldn't take her money like that... because we don't have a lot of money to spend that easily so when she was sleeping I put it back in her wallet.

I thought that she wouldn't know that I put it back, but she did, and she just went out and bought clothes for me and I thanked her a lot. And started to give her a hug an' shhh. I just think my mom is great, because she is always next to me no matter what and she shows that she loves me a lot. That's why I think she is better than most moms.

-Keon, Alameda

From The Beat: This is one of the most powerful testimonies to unconditional family love we've read in a long time. Your mother sounds like an amazing woman, who has raised an amazing son. Make her proud!

My Mom Left Me

I wish I could say a lot about my mom, but I can't. The reason is because my mom left me when I was three years old, so I just had people trying to be my mom.

My dad's wife tried to be my mom but I was not wit' that. She used to beat me and tell me that I would never be nothing and stuff like that. I moved in with my grandma after a while, so I got away from that, and my aunty Babe took me in as in as my son, so my aunty is my mom.

My real mom found me, so she called my grandma's house and I got to talk to her twice the whole time I lived with my grandma. Every time I called she wouldn't answer, or she didn't want to talk to me. So I just left it alone and then just not too long ago, I was told she was bipolar. Ever since then I haven't talked to her and now I know the reason.

Now I'm just without a mom.

-Lost Child, Alameda

From The Beat: You could make a movie, or three, about all the early troubles you went through as an innocent youngster with a family that had so many struggles. Our heart breaks when we imagine you as a young boy, with a stepmother who treated you so badly, but we're also grateful that there were these other two women, your Grandma and your aunt, who loved you and took you in. Were they able to give you the love and support you needed? We also feel for your mom, though. Bi-Polar illness is one of the most nightmarish mental illness there are, and it ripped this poor woman away from her baby boy. How do you feel all these changes in your early life have effected you today? Have they made you angry? Compassionate? Angry at women? Appreciative of women?

everybody had a vision of being behind bars
like me i knew i was going to see this place
guess what happened i'm in here right now
writing the beats from within.

RIP Frank

When I first lost my cousin Frank, I felt a pain in my heart that I have never felt in my life, it was something in my heart that was telling me to change and it was something in my mind telling me to retaliate.

At this point the only thing I could think about is retaliation and so did everyone else in the squad. I know that retaliation will not bring my cousin back to life, but why would you kill a fourteen-year-old boy, when the people that your funkin' wit is right there! Why not kill them!

For a minute I didn't understand this, then I started thinking maybe they killed lil Frankie to send the people that they were funkin' wit' a message saying that they will kill the most innocent person to get to them.

So should I want to retaliate and get revenge, even though I know that it will ruin more innocent peoples lives and destroy the community further, and that person's family will go through so much grief, pain, and sorrow, and probably look at the situation and tell themselves that they have nothing to live for. Plus, that person's love ones will not have him to love anymore.

This is everything that the squad and my family had to go through. Rest in peace Lil' Frank we love you.

-Lil' Gary, Alameda

From The Beat: From the piece, we hope you have come to the conclusion that the best way to handle this loss, is to move on from the violence. Leave the violence!! In the name of Lil' Frank and all lost souls, change your ways and be a part of the solution not the problem in a community hungry for a better day!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Alone...

I'm feeling so alone inside
You see what the "G" has done to me
It's making me feind for it real bad
All these urges and cravings
Thinking do I want it or not?
Will I go out there and screw up again?
Are things going to change yet?
Am I still going to be the same?
Do I really want my recovery?
I'm still deciding on whether yes or no?
Finding out stuff at visiting
Things like "mina, your tio died yesterday"
That stuff makes me want to be "la corrida"
All this stuff makes me go loca
Why do things like this happen to me?
How do I deal with them?
If I was out I'd use or cut
What do I do instead of that?
What if I don't know other ways 2 cope?
Will someone please help me deal
I need my madre. I need my tio.
God's taking the ones I love
How do I keep smiling so much
That's how I deal, is it ok?
I'm feeling so alone inside
So...alone.

-Danielle, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You get right to the point: a large piece of the puzzle of sobriety is what you do when life isn't fair, when there is pain and difficulties in life. Learning problem solving skills helps people explore a variety of ways to cope with or work through problems in life. Problem solving skills take practice to learn and to apply on a regular basis. You can learn from and practice these skills with a variety of people from teachers, to counselors, to detention staff, etc. You don't have to face the difficulties in life alone. Also to be able to solve your problems you must be clear-headed enough to think... will you stay clear-headed? As you develop your own problem solving skills, you will have less of a desire to cut or to escape with drugs, and you will feel like you have more control over your life. Who can you talk to and begin to learn new ways to cope with the difficulties in your life? There are people waiting to help you.

Mother's Day

What makes my mom better then everybody else's mom is
the fact that she's my mom
she is better then everybody else
she is the best mom in the world in my eyes
she loves me more the anybody in the world
even though I've broken her heart a hundred times
she's always been there for me
I love my mom with all my heart
even while I was growing up, times were always hard
but some how moms would always put a smile on our faces
no matter what she would always make those hard times
not so hard
now that I'm older it seems like I keep hurting her more
and more
every time I mess up
I wish that I were there with my mom to tell her how much I
love her
miss her, and how bad I wish I could be with her to help her
I know that times are harder now that her baby's locked
away on another Mother's Day
I know she's struggling and she needs my help
but I can't be there 'cause I'm up in here locked in my cell
I wish I could give her a hug and a kiss and tell her
everything will change
but for now they remain the same
I love you mom that will never change
can't wait until I'm rich and can give you the world you
deserve it mom
you brought me into this one mom you're the best mom in
the world
,because you're my mom I love you with all my heart your
son.

-Jeremy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a beautiful tribute you deliver to your mom. She sounds like a mom that doesn't deserve what you have put her through. Why do you suppose things have gotten so out of hand? What can you do to improve your ways? Don't wait until you're rich to show her that you love and care for her, 'cause that may take years if it ever happens. Show her what she means to you by putting your words into action! What's the plan?

Life

Life's ups and downs, they come and go
But I thank God because they help you grow
God said he'll never put more on you than you can
bear
So when people laugh you shouldn't care
I used to be a slave to crack
But today I've taken my life back
I'm now four months clean and sober
And I refuse to ever have to start over
I'm doing this all on my own
because my parents won't even pick up the phone
My faith gets weak and I begin to cry
But I refuse to ever ask him "why"?
For I know that everything happens for a reason
I'm keeping my head up and reaping a good season
So when my heart is filled with sorrow
I just keep my head up and know that I can face
tomorrow
Life's ups and downs help you to take it
Trust in the Lord and you can make it.

-Louis, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: What others say about you means nothing. What you say about you means everything. Louis you seem to have a fierce determination to take a new path with your life. Your enthusiasm for life is contagious. Most likely many will be drawn to your generous heart. Beware of your desire to help others when you begin your new walk. Hang out with others who are walking the path you desire to walk. Who are your companions on the outs? There is truth in saying that we become like those with whom we spend our time... with whom will you choose to surround yourself? We can see you someday bringing your own story of struggle and healing to other young people.

You Don't Know Me

I see myself in a class,
but not just any class,
a class in Juvenile Hall.
Kids who messed up,
kids who didn't do nothing, and some kids was just never
given a second chance.
No one will see the things I've seen or feel what I feel.
Others see me as another Vietnamese boy who just messed
up again,
but that's not all that happened. There's more to me than
that.
The cops and my PO probably just see me as a screw up,
and not going to change.
No matter what it takes, that's not true, that's why they just
don't know me.
Some see me as a gang member, some see me as another
kid.
You know what? You don't know shhh about me...
I don't wish what they see in me or whatever they think or
anything—
it's their mind—let them think what they want to.

-Unknown Viet Boi, Santa Clara

From The Beat: So true, none of us truly know who you are. All the system has going on your is this police and probation report, and all you can do is hope and pray that in the end you will get a second chance to show the community you are bigger and better than what others may think of you. We like the person we know and we hope that person is the one that will get his freedom back.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Whole House To Herself

If she could have anything for Mother's Day
It would be a whole house to herself
So she can hotbox
Or a bubbler
That's about the size of a fox
All she wants for Mother's Day
Is to get superbly blazed
She'll get messed up
And stay in her room for days
I mean, she'll expect a Happy Mother's Day
A pipe and a bag to get blazed
That's all she cares about
Even more than her kids
But she gets so high
Then acts like she forgets

-Dexter, Marin

From The Beat: Your Mother's Day poem is so sad. Do you think your mother is not only neglecting you and your brothers and sisters, is she also harming you? We say she it! Give us a more detailed poem of what is life like at home. Is getting high an everyday ritual for her? Tell us more about your mom. Tell us how you get by day by day when you are home. Describe home!

GoodBye

Q-vole Beat? I just wanna say good bye to all who know me and to you. I wanna thank you for all ya good advice and letting me know that I sill got a life to handle and a daughter to raise. I'm gonna do my best to do my program and get home to my family. I hope I just don't put myself or my sister in the same position again (to be back here). I'm just gonna take with me all your good advice, I'm not doing drugs anymore, I'm dropping that life(well gonna try my best.)

I realize, (well now) that this isn't the life to live and there's much better out there for me instead of hurting myself and my family.

Well, I'm getting released this coming week. I'm not sure what day but I'm glad both me and my sister are leaving to a group home. Well to all that know me, keep ya head up, and hurry up and get out you got family out there waiting, for you.

-Young mom, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Best to you too. We hope you use all the godo advice one gave you while incarcerated. We hope you have the support from elders when you need it too. You do not have to travel this road alone, seek support anytime. There is always a caring person to support and listen to you. Best in overcoming the gangs, the drugs, the old life and moving forward!

Adults Who Buy Alcohol For Kids

Adults who act like children? Sometimes it's coo', but it depends on what you're doing. Like adults who buy their kids drink or let their kid drink or do drugs, that's not coo' to me. That's messed up.

Some adults just need to grow. They screwed up, an' need to think about what can happen to them if they don't' get their shhh together, because in the long run, it's gone mess yo' life up if you keep buying your kids drink, an' shhh like that. What if you get caught buying that for any kid, not just your kid? What if you do get caught buying drinks for a kid? What would you do or what can they do to you?

-Man Man San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't remember seeing this point of view ever expressed before in The Beat, so we really appreciate reading it. You're right that adults who buy alcohol (or drugs) for kids can get themselves in a lot of trouble. But what makes this such an immature and irresponsibly childish thing to do is the life-long consequences they are "buying" for those kids. Being allowed (even encouraged) to drink at an early age may be amusing to the adults who provide them, but there is nothing amusing about what those kids will have to go through as they struggle with addiction and all that comes with it. We don't know if you speak out of personal experience or not, but you are bringing a very adult perspective to this problem, and we hope a lot of so-called adults can read your words and reflect on what you're saying.

Shattered Pieces

I see myself shattered into a million broken pieces
Lying there waiting to be cleaned up by a broom
My life desperately flashes before my eyes...bam...bam
I see the pain I went through all sixteen years of my life
Those late nights with friends, not caring whether my madre was alive or not
She was my responsibility as I was hers and I let her lay there
That horrific night I continue to remember over and over again
She fell and I didn't help her up. I came back and left her in la bano with a blanket
Why did I do that? I don't understand...how could I? She was my mom.
Now she's gone and I'm left here alone to fight for myself.
How do I do it? I always manage to stay strong.
I see myself shattered in a million broken pieces.
Lying there...finally being picked up,
no longer helpless but still waiting for my mommy.

-Danielle, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You are crying out for answers! Have you found that there are no easy answers to what you ask? It can be difficult to work through the how and whys of difficult circumstances or even the consequences we face. Can you find resolve, or at least relief, in the response that "you did the best you could do at that time"? You say you are in a million pieces, but that finally the pieces are being picked up...who or what has begun this process for you? We honestly are amazed that you have faced such pain...your smile is like a light to those around you. We pray that it reflects back hope to you in the midst of your brokenness. With the passing of time you may find answers to the questions you are asking.

Glen Mills, A Good Opportunity

What it do, Beat? This is Kwes. Well, I am still here because my PO is getting my ticket to Glen Mills. The judge gave me a good opportunity to go there. The only hard part is leaving my family, but I can last, because I been here for almost six months without my family. If I went to a group home instead of Glen Mills, I think I would finish the program, but not get something out of it, because I seen it happen to many people. But I am lucky I am going there and I should be leaving next week, fo' show. Late, cousin.

-Kwes San Francisco

From The Beat: As we've said many times (even to you), the most important predictor of success or failure in any program or placement is the attitude you bring to it. You have such an adult way of looking at and such a powerful desire to make the best out of the hand you've been dealt, that we feel certain you are going to get the most out of Glen Mills and be that much stronger (for yourself and your family) when you return. Our only wish — besides success — is that you write us from there and tell us how it is. Good luck.

Life

Life is a time and time is not long.
You only have so many hours in a day.
Days are not long because it is only 365 day in the year.
I have proof that life is not long.
I am 17 years old and it feel like just a day ago I was in the 7th grade playing basketball in jr. high school.
Life is like obstacle that God has put up for you and you will learn from it or fail for that is how life is.
The obstacle can be from a girl, money, drug, gangs, jail, and sometimes friends
but the obstacle in life that you can grow from is family,
school GOD, and a good mom and dad in your life.
Life is not a walk in the playpen l
ife is hard as hell.
That is all I can tell you about life at this time b
ut when I know more I will hit you on it.

-Gd, Alameda

From The Beat: Absolutely, life is full of test. Each day is a test full of choices that you will either benefit from or will set you back. We hoep from tis point, you will take advantage of this life, that does go by quickly, so you don't waste anymore days chillin' in a cell!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

It Pains Me To See . . .

It pains me to see...
My mother's tears fall from her cheeks, like bullets
It pains me to see...
My family struggling and not living life to the fullest
It pains me to see...
My father going through everything I'm doing
It pains me to see...
My life falling down and keep going
It pains me to see...
Myself locked up and maybe later on dead
It pains me to see...
Out my eyes black and red
It pains me to see...
Out my window and see the flow of the beat
It pains me to see...
My blood boil up to a serious heat
It pains me to see...
Myself in the system's hands for a couple years
It pains me to see...
Myself evolving more and more fear
It pains me to see...
The next generation getting real near
It pains me to see...
The struggle these young kids have
It pains me to see...
The world wanting to split in half

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You carry great pain, by the poor choices you have made in your young life Chuccy. What will it take for you to pick yourself up? What will it take to see the light? We can't expressed this enough, but given where you are today, we hope you do not stop writing and telling your stories, you have a priceless gift as a writer. Your writing doesn't only help others, it truly helps you out too!

My Dad Acts Like A Child

My daddy acting like a child because he not taking care of my lil' brother and sisters. Oh, I almost forgot. He not even taking care of him. He has chosen crack over his responsibilities.

Even though I used to him before he went to San Quentin, but it was always embarrassing. He was always asking me for my lunch money that mom had to give every day til' I started my own job.

-Young Swiss San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though we were thinking of how adults sometimes act playfully, like children, when we wrote this topic, you have given us an excellent example of an adult who is as irresponsible as a child. This piece illustrates something that we say all the time in The Beat, and that is that having children does not make you a parent. Being a parent requires an adult's sense of responsibility. Making children is the easiest thing in the world. Any dog can do it. But taking care of children requires making sacrifices for them, guiding them and protecting them. In all these areas, the man that made you has not yet become a father. We're sorry that you've had to experience this, and hope that it makes you want to be a responsible adult before you bring children into the world.

Mother's Day

What's up, Beat? It 's a special day to all moms and grandmas--also, to their momma's mommas.

But as I grew up, I only met my mom a couple of times. She has been out of my life since I was about eight months old. She calls me all the time and tells me she loves me all the time. Does she really? I have no idea. I mean, I don't even call her "mom" when I do talk to her.

A lot of people give me problems about not having a mom or when they talk shhh, I get really pissed off, because I never really had her.

People say maybe I'm like the way I am—crazy, stupid, unorganized--whatever they wanna call it. But little that they know—my mom being away never really affected me or my life. Why? It sounds crazy, don't it? But I've been raised by my grandma since I was those eight months old. I call her "moms." In my perspective she is the one and only. Not as hard as I thought it would be, but I managed to get through this. Much love to my real mom, but as I see it, my mother is my grandma. I promised to live my life to the fullest and keep my mind off my mom's situation, and I have been. Happy Mother's Day, Moms (Grandma.)

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Oh Chuccy, tell us more about your grandma. What is it that makes her so special? Tell us about her great qualities! Tell us how she became your mom and why your mom is not really in your life? From wehre we sit, we see an a young man who was raised around plenty of love and sadly made a poor choice and we hope in the end will be free and do something very productive and satisfying in his life. Have a little faith!

I Wish You Could See . . .

When you look at me, what do you see?
Dreads, dark skin, and my jeans saggin'.
It can't get any worse, in this world in my world, that's a label.
To them I'm a dope dealer.
I'm a thief.
I'm a hyphy delinquent.
They don't know I put on that armor every day
when I wake up to protect my mind
from the things my heart desires.
It's a shame I gotta protect my true self
from the person I have become
I wake up in the morning and think.
I think about my life and what I have chosen and where I might be.
I think what if I didn't have it so bad.
If I didn't have to hustle.
I didn't have to steal
And I didn't have to be so damn hyphy, but...
It's two sides of me...
I wish you could see I don't belong in this armor ,
deep down I'm just normal. Deep down there is hope!
Look deep in my eyes, and you might just see the real me.

-Lil' Cb, Alameda

From The Beat: It seems that there are two kinds of crimes, one is moral and legal, and that's the crimes people commit that get them locked up – hustling, stealing, often hurting other people. Then there's another kind of crime that is more personal – the crime of hiding one's true goodness. Unlike legal crimes, the punishment for this is immediate and cruel, the pain of wearing that mask. You deserve the best life has to offer – and yes, especially when you write poems this heartfelt and open, we do see that you deserve to be seen without that armor, seen in all your natural strength and glory.

Streets

Streets got me into lots of trouble
Streets is somewhere I would be at all the time
If I needed money I would go to da streets
I would be home just for a little while
Then argue with moms
Then get mad and I go to the streets.
Got drugs from the streets,
Learned the negative from da streets
So many things happened out on da streets
I be in da box staring at da four walls
Thinking, "Man, so much happened to me
out on the streets, and I never learn my lesson
I could have died..."
And I keep on doing what I'm doing
Being out on da streets, doing negative
Being locked up five times
'Cause of da streets

-Stony San Francisco

From The Beat: Now that you're behind these walls and have time to reflect on your life on the streets, can you tell us how the attraction of the streets is so powerful that you keep going back even after you have experienced the consequences five times! If it's not negative consequences that will lead you away from the negative streets (and these negative consequences are pretty mild compared to what the system has waiting for you down the line), what would it take for you to decide your life and freedom are worth more than what the homies tell you it's worth and what the system tells you you're worth. What will it take for you to start valuing your own life enough to keep yourself safe and free?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Adults Who Act Like Children

I know an adult that act like a child. He's my uncle, and he lives with my grandmother, which is his mom. He is about 56 still living with mom! He needs to grow up and move out. All he does is lay down in the living room and eat his candy every day, and that is his whole life.

He needs to grow up and finally get a job. And the bad thing is my grandma lets him do whatever he wants. She treats him like he's still a baby, when he's almost a senior. I don't feel like she should treat him like that. She treats him like he's a king or something when she needs to stop. But that is her only son, so we can't tell her how to treat him.

-Des San Francisco

From The Beat: This takes our subject in an entirely different direction, and we like that. It's too bad that your uncle lives like he's still a baby instead of a grown man, but can you blame him if his own mother not only allows it, but creates it? We think that one of the responsibilities of parenthood is to teach your children independence and self-sufficiency so they can go out in the world and make it on their own. She has not done that, so who is responsible? Do you think she has helped him by not demanding that he grow up? What will happen to him when she's no longer around to "mother" him? What about you, Des? How are you going to be a responsible adult?

What I See

Long hair
Cute face, no pimples, no zits
Nice eyes, smooth skin
Beautiful within
Short legs
Medium size feet
Love the way they look
They're just so sweet
The stomach got to go
It's not working with me
It's just a big no
Happy with my lips
And can't forget my button nose

-Lil' Bipp San Francisco

From The Beat: And don't forget that great gift of a first-class brain! Keep using it to lessen the pain. You've got ears to hear and eyes to see. Use those gifts to keep you free!

Mother

Today is Mother's Day
(Well, in Mexico)
So here's something for her
I love you, Mom
She is who I wake up for
She is who I adore
She is who I love every day
More, more, and more
She is for whom I am going to change
So our relationship will never die in vain
She puts the smiles on my face
And for that she will never be replaced
My mother means the world to me
And that I can guarantee
She always knows when I am down
Even if it's just a frown
I always feel sad when she ain't around
And she always knows where I can be found
My mother is my angel
And I love her unconditionally
And no matter what
I will always love you, Mommy

-Marx, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We sure feel the love in your poem for your mom. Tell us more about your mom. Is she in Mexico? When is the last time you saw your mom? What brought you to the USA? Regardless, the love for your mom is very special most of us readers can feel where you are coming from when you speak of this special love.

My Dad The CHild

This week I want to talk about adults who act like children. I know of one, for that he half way created me. This person is my pops.

The reason why I say that he acts like a child is because he is not a real father, for that he still has the mind set of a young teen. The reason is because he still thinks that he's a teenager and he never let go of that because he committed many problems, from stealing cars, jacking people and also the weakness of not saying no to drugs. This is the main reason why I think he acts like a child because he is still doing them even though he is a forty-five-year-old teenager.

Whenever I had the rare chances of being around him, because he was usually in jail or prison, he was either really intoxicated or high on hard drugs. When he was this way he would make a clown of himself, whatever the mood was.

An example of being of a clown was last weekend, my family had a party for my grandma and grandpa's sixty-third wedding anniversary, while I was in here. My dad and uncle were intoxicated, and started fighting each other because my dad heard something different that my uncle said and attacked him in front of my grandparents. That's why I think my dad is still a child.

-Rt, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Not good. He has a lot of growing up to do, and the question is, will he? What do you think it will take for your dad to mature up? Is it too late? Have you ever spoken to your dad about this? Is he approachable? WE suppose it is in your best interest if he is not a person who can handle such a critique, is to leave him alone and lead by example.

Gang Bangin' Life

Hey Beat, my life started all wrong. It's not all that. My whole family is all gang bangers, and I'm not proud about it. My mom since day one got caught selling drug. They took her to the fed's for three years, and she left me with my aunt. My aunt for my whole life raised me, and I call her my mom because I care about her so much.

When I was 11, I started gang banging and selling drugs and going to YGC, and ever since I been coming back. I wish I could go back and fix all the bad things in life that I did. For all you gang bangers, gangs are going to get you 6 feet under their ground.

Well Beat, I have to go to my cell because I'm in YGC doing time because gang banging. Keep the peace out in the streets. Much love peace.

-Sneeky San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for writing, Sneeky. It seems like you have looked around you and decided that you've had enough with "gangbanging" because it isn't working for you. That shows a maturity we don't often find here. The remorse you feel for the bad you've done can be overcome by the good you plan to do in the future. What do you really want to do with your life? What do you have passion for? What's your plan for achieving your goals?

Only Exits Out The Game

Want all that beef?
You gone die by the mad cow
Or they gone mow yo' block down
And eat chow off yo' snowplow
And this goes down
When you live yo' life by the pound
So take a second day to think about
If you really ready to go that route
'Cause it's a whole n'other map
To help build on yo' foundation
And if you make the right turns
You'll have a choice on what you facing

-Paradise San Francisco

From The Beat: You have been with The Beat for long enough for us to see that you have been building steadily on your foundation. It is such a pleasure to see the movement in your thinking and your writing. You are on a new path, and one that, with a little luck and a lot of perseverance, will lead you through doors of positive experience. Up, up and away!

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

What do others see when they look at me, well they look at me really weird, because I have tattoos on my face. Some people don't like communicating with me, because they think I might do something, or I always end up getting in arguments because of the tattoo on my face.

Now I would like them to look at me as if they see me, and they need to tell me something to come up to me and tell me what they need to say, or I want them to see me like they see other people.

-Lil' One

From The Beat: Well, for some they can do that, treat you with great respect, and for others well the tat on your face will guarantee problems in communicating. We're sure you knew this when you go the tat on your face.

People Mostly See Us Through The Stories They Hear

Others only see us as what they hear or what they want to see us as. People mostly see us as the stories they hear and not for the people we really are. Some people judge us before they know who we really are.

We can tell war stories and pretend to be hard, but deep down inside, I don't think everybody wants violence in their lives. People only gangbang and fight because they have to. It could be the neighborhood they lived in and they have to protect themselves. But what I'm trying to say, is, that if you met a gang member or a person who is locked up, then you automatically think that they're bad people and we are criminals, and that we will never change. But the truth is that not everybody is cold-hearted, and people can change. I think that nobody can really know you but yourself.

-Ultra

From The Beat: That is why those of you who write in the Beat Within can truly help break the stereotypes that are quickly placed on you when you come into juvenile hall. WE hear you loud and clear. Now tell us who is Ultra!

Mom I have learned many things from you.

Mother's Day

Hey Beat! How you been? Me, I'm Ok. Excited and anxious and so many other feelings that I can't explain and the reason why I say that is because I am getting out next Thursday and I'm really happy.

I'm going to write about my mom. I'm not saying my mom is better than anyone else and I'm definitely not saying she's worse, I am just going to tell you why I think my mom is the best to me.

My mom is the best woman in the world because no matter what I did what I said. or where I was at, she supported me, she never left my side she was just always there and I love her so much and it's not because I'm in here that I realized she's had my back I realized it when my sister was going through some hard ass shhh, and I was going through a tough time around the same time but not as bad.

I started acting up when I was like twelve but my mom never left our side and I know she doesn't plan on to anytime soon I just hope I could give her something special for Mother's day but I can't but I am planning to do something when I get out. I really do love my mom and I don't know what the hell I would do without her.

-Ana

From The Beat: Well Ana, we'd love to hear how life is going for you since you left the hall. We hope you are doing well on probation and that you and mom are talking.

Enough Is Enough!

I'm tired of teachers, police officers and authorities thinking I'm just some juvenile delinquent.

Elderly people thinking I'm some screw up or thug just because I sag my jeans and sport a white tee-shirt two sizes larger than what is expected.

I'm tired of people making an effort to avoid me if in a dark place at night or on the sidewalk alone.

I'm tired of being perceived as a "bad kid" and people thinking, "he's bound to mess up."

I am none of the above. I am a young intelligent individual with dreams and goals I would like to achieve. I am humble and respectful to elders and my authorities. I might have a few bumps along the road as everyone does, but don't look for me to fail. Look for me to succeed. In the future don't look for me in the teacher's lounge rooms or in large businesses.

So maybe next time you will see a "screw up" who "grew up," to be something other than what is expected.

-Damon

From The Beat: Where do your dreams see you in the future if not in the teacher's lo9und or in a large business? Do you see yourself growing up now? IS there anything you can do to be looked at differently, or are you OK about how one perceives you? As long as you are fine then stay the way you are! Otherwise, change!

Dear Mom

I'm sorry I can't be with you on Mother's day and on my birthday course, I miss you so much. I regret everything that I did to you. But I never meant to hurt you and give you that pain I once did when I would runaway. Te amo con todo mi Corazon. Just know I do very much appreciate everything you have done for me. Honesty me being in this torcida has made me stronger and made me realize my actions.

Mom I have learned many things from you. Me writing you this is making me get emotional 'cause I never really told you these words. But I'm happy you're my mother even though we have our good times and bad times, you will always be my mom whether you like it or not. I don't wanna be without your love 'cause you're the only one I'm thinking of. I don't wanna live without your love so mom don't' you go away. Even though I'm your trouble's baby no matter what I do you will still love me. There are times when I find you wanna keep yourself for me. When I do have the strength I'm just a mirror of what I see. Well mom I love you. Hope to see you soon.

-Juzette

From The Beat: Why do you suppose you ran away if you didn't want to hurt your mother? You love your mom, and you have come to expect her to be there every time, what's gonna happen if she one day chooses not to rescue you? Exactly, you don't want to think about that day, so make this moment the time you clean up your act, work on getting home and be the "good child," do it for you and her!

Immature Adults

I think that a person's age should not affect the way a person acts. Because a person can start acting like an adult and start taking responsibilities of being an adult. Some people don't, some people are just not ready to let go of being a kid, some people do but sometimes adults also think they feel the need to escape from all their responsibilities and have a little fun once in a while and go back to their childish ways. So as long as a person can take the responsibilities I don' t see why we can't just take a break once in a while and have fun. That's all for now. I'll talk to you Beaters next time.

-G-Boy

From The Beat: Well, if you are 17 or 18 years old, you shouldn't be acting like a seven year old when one is talk to you, right? Of course there is a time and place to having a good time, but when things are serious we too have to get focused and mature up! Right?

My Momma

A lot of things make my mom better then everybody else's,
at the same time theirs a lot that make her worse then everybody else's,
but she's my mom and that's what counts.
I've been in here for a minute and see everyone's moms and dads come visit them
it hurts, but I don't know what's happening out their.
What she's dealing with so I don't blame her.
She's always here for me, but I look at it like this; I put myself here.
She always teaching me something. Maybe she's disappointed and hurt.
I'm not the one to be judging no one, or whether my moms better or worser then others she's still moms. I keep in the back of my mind always....I'll always love my momma she's my favorite girl. You only get one. You only get one...

-9

From The Beat: Treat that one with a new attitude! Treat your mother better by showing her that you no longer are a problem, but you are a young person interested in improving herself and are so capable of living in your community outside of juvenile. Make your mother proud!

From Another Man's Eyes

Watching my life from another man's eyes
Seen a gangsta's life, filled with strife
Now I see it all started off from the age of nine
Police kick in the front door and grandma's cryin
All you could hear is mijo! Mijo why?
Cops say back to her, mijo! Mijo! 'Bout to do some time
Once they get the handcuffs on real tight
They ask where were you at late last night
We have reason to believe you were involved in a fight
And one of your friends pulled out a knife
I'm sorry sir I was nowhere in sight
Wherever you got your info it wasn't right
Ha, ha, ha, ha it wasn't right
I seen you myself when we drove-by
Sir no disrespect but that is a lie
I was here at my grandmother's house all night
You're coming with us unless you drop some dimes
Take him to booking he matches the description so he did the crime.
Locked up at the age of nine!
Fighting the walls asking why?
But soon he was free
No longer sweet but a product of the streets
10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and now 15 came so fast
In fear of his own life running from the task
To be continued...
To the G's in this place
Much love and respect.

-Lil' Larry

From The Beat: Well, you take us back in time as a nine year old and your initial encounter with the cops. So, were you there? Was it a mistake? How did this cycle get so out of hand? How come you didn't listen to your family? Why did you fall prey to the streets? Do you really blame the cops? Or is it you?

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

I wish they could see how helpful I can be, 'cause I usually help others before myself, I guess it's a habit, but that's just what makes my day go by.

People usually look at me and think well this guy looks like a wimp, but in a good way like I picture him getting a good paying job without putting in any labor.

I'd say these kind of things because I get from personal experience. In the past people would try to punk me but I just don't give in and fight back and that leads me into trouble, how can I avoid these kind of things when it always happens, perhaps I'm growing up too fast or people just have a slower rate in being more mature.

This world we live in is not perfect because everywhere we go we can usually feel like an outcast because people are not used to see you besides their people, giving you that uncomfortable look, I always feel like I'm a book with an inappropriate cover therefore others always judge me.

-Read the book

From The Beat: How can not fighting when getting punked get you into trouble? Sounds to us like you want to be portrayed as a person who walks away from trouble! You cannot force people to take notice, if some recognize your good, in the end they'll recognize if they tell you to your face or not.

How They See Me, How I See Me

Here is how some people see when they think I'm a bad person by the way I dress and look but others see me as a person with a talent just throwing it away and not trying my best to do what is right and also just being really stubborn and not hanging out with the right people.

In my eyes I see myself as a young man with a lot of up and down but with a lot of potential and everything, I try but could do better if I didn't smoke weed and didn't hang out with the wrong friends.

-Martin

From The Beat: What kind of talents do you have? You see the problem with you, so fix it! Sure it's easier said than done, but done dwell and waste your time any more, take action!

Dear Mr. Beat or Whoever Decided To Stop The Beat

You suck! Why can't you still come to see me? I'm very upset because I like Dennis (The Beat facilitator) and he talks to me and changes my thinking in a good way. Plus, I hate you because you don't care about me. I thought The Beat would always come here.. That's bull shhh, so fine, leave and never come back. If that happens, remember I hate you. If you decide to stay, then you will have my everlasting love. I know you want to be blessed with that. So think about it. Plus, I got ten dollars in my backpack in GR (Girls Receiving). You take it and then come back. There, problem solved!

-Samantha

From The Beat: Hey, you jumped the gun, The Beat is not going anywhere! We have had to make tremendous cutbacks, but at this point we will continue to give you a product that you have come to embrace. As far as hating Mr. Beat, wake the hell up! Listen, we are a non-profit, if we have no money, that's it, it ends, or we truly cut it back to a couple unit, that's why it takes the whole community to step up and save our program, meaning the system too has to pitch in and play apart. We have become an institution within the institution, a program young people have come to rely on since September 1996, and it is our goal to be here for years and years to come! Keep your ten too, thanks anyway.

It's Good To Play Around, But Not All The Time

W'at's up, Beat? That little saying, "Stop acting like a child." It's not because of your age, it's because the way you conduct yourself in front of people, like always playing around all the time or just always doin' lil' kid shhh. But it's good to play around, but not all the time. There is a point where no one can take it no mo', and just say that saying, "Stop acting like a kid or child." It's just annoying and sometimes irritating. But some people just don't say it to you, they just keep it inside of themselves. Well, that's my example of "Acting like a child."

-Siaki

From The Beat: Excellent example of one acting like a child. We hope to hear from you soon, we miss seeing you in the workshop big man!

One Dream

Today here I am writing to the Beat Within on this fine wasted day. Well folks this is that one crazy apache writing to you from San Jose this week. I'll fill everyone in on the topic "if you look into my eyes tell me what you see..."

When you look in my eyes you will see this fine looking man ready for whatever for the right things, first his family, second his education then last, his future like what kind of goals I have set out for myself here.

I'm gonna let you know what's up with me... My long term goal goes from now 'till the day I past. Before I die I'm gonna have a family, first go to a four-year college, Stanford. Playing football for that team. That's what I see when I look in my eyes also that's what people will see when they look in my eyes.

To everyone who don't think they can make it, keep y'all head held tight alright. Remember, one life, one love one dream. I'm out for today, so don't be afraid just do as I say baby. That's what people will see as they stare into my eyes.

-Indio

From The Beat: Keep dreaming, and doing your part each day to make your dream come true. Pushing for Stanford is very ambitious, but hey, why not!? Do not forget where you have come from on your journey. You will give the young generation hope, that they too can reach for their dreams.

Momma Loves Her Boy

The thing that makes my mother better is that my mother always tells me she loves me as soon as I step out the door, why? I don't know why maybe because she's worried about me, will I come home, will I be locked up, will she see me again?

-Momma's boy

From The Beat: A good mother, which you have, will worry about her child(ren) until the day she dies, regardless of your age. So, make your mother's life easier by living right!

Reason For Loving My Jefita

Pues, today's topic is what makes your jefita better or worse than everybody else's. first of all, I ain't no one to judge other people's jefita, but to me I think that my jefita is the best. La rason por que digo esto is 'cause my Jefita has always beign there for me en las Buena y las malas. She has always supported me no matter what I do. I love my Jefita por vida. She's been like a mom and dad to me desde que mi Jefito torico.

Pues, there' s many other rasones pro que amo my Jefita but mainly that's it. Pues I would just like to tell her forgive me Jefita por mi vida loca. Well Beat I ain't got nothing else to say so I guess this is it so to all, keep your head up and this vato is out alrato.

-Snowman

From The Beat: You love your mom so much, you better start showing her in a way that doesn't make her sad or worry about you. Handle your program and move on!

Sorry Mom

Mother's Day was terrible for my mom because I didn't give here a present for Mother's Day, but I am giving her lots of stress by being in here.

I go to my room and miss my mom, a lot of flashbacks messing up my life I am sorry mom I love and I am missing you.

-Lil' Paniko

From The Beat: What's the plan upon getting out of juvenile? What will you do to make your life better, and less stressful on yourself and your mom?

Entry One

Prop 21 tryin' to have us all done
Only way to win is to make the right spin
Gang enhancement is nothing but an arrangement
To have us all down
Ya fam's face gonna frown
The only way to survive is to keep ya brain alive
They want take away the guns
It'll take away their funds
Rather see us kill then to see us deal
Deal with our problems
Please, oh no don't rob him
You'll continue with his cycle
Stay away from the statistics
Life is precious so don't risk it!

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Yes indeed the law is no joke when it comes to violent cases and gangs. If one is smart you do your part to stay away from the gang life and anything that will take your freedom away. While you still have a chance, we encourage you to deal/address your problems!

If I Could See Myself

If I could se myself through their eyes, damn out there you wouldn't think I was the same person 'cause you could get robbed for your shoes and Ipod.

If I could see myself in your eyes I wouldn't like me. Where I'm from you know me by my name not face you hear about me all the time but never meet me and if you do it's all bad for you.

If I could see myself in your eyes I would fear me I don't stay with no gat and I don't need a hood to get my back, I look out for my own self no one else and I thought you knew I mob by myself.

If I could see myself in your eyes but I can't, so it ain't my fault.

-Vato

From The Beat: Oh, street boy, you sound like one bad dude, that has a long hard road ahead for himself. Wake up young boy before everything comes tumbling down on you. Is this how you want to be portrayed in the future?

Never Had A Childhood

What's up Beat, well for me I'm doing good. I don't really write in The Beat that much but I was feeling today's topic. Well I don't really trip about adults who act like children, 'cause I'm 18 and I act like a child sometimes. The reason for that is 'cause I never had a chance to be a kid 'cause of the way I grew up, but that's a whole other story. But yo' Beat that's all I got to say. Late.

-Guero

From The Beat: What problems in your life occurred that you could not be a child? What was it like for you to have to grow up so soon?

My Mom

My mom is a very amazing person, she's always by my side no matter what I do. She never expected that I would ever end up in this place, but even though I did she still loves me. I couldn't possibly ever repay her debt back for all the things she's gone through because of me.

I remember how she used to constantly shed tears because I use to mess up and do bad things. I remember I used to break her heart day by day. I was an ignorant and awful son and I took things for granted, I never cared about my mom's feelings. But now all I want to do is to let her know that I love her, and Happy Mother's Day.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: Of course your mother is going to love you regardless, but is it fair to put the love of your life through all this b-s? You know the answer, and now the ball is in your court to show yourself and your mom that you can live a good life.

My Aunt, My Mama

Well I don't' have no mom
I got a aunt that is my mom
this one is gong out to her
I love you
well when I see you I wanna shed a tear
but before I shed one
you are the one that starts first
every time you visit me I get a good feeling
when you look at me I can see all the rain in your eyes
I just wish I was with you at home
well I love you.

-Chris

From The Beat: To be loved and cared for is what life is all about. Don't make it any harder on your auntie, now is the time to address the problems that bring you to juvenile and get back in your aunt's loving arms youngsta!

My Childish Uncle

I have a uncle who acts like a child because he is one of those people who acts stupid, 'cause he doesn't like to act his age because he is a crack head. My uncle likes to act like a little kid. That's all I have for today. My uncle is a stupid mutha because he just is. Some times I get mad at him and I want to beat his ass.

-Froggy

From The Beat: Drugs are way bad, as you see through the life of your uncle. We bet it is hard to live around a crack head. Can you help him or suggest another family member to talk to him to get some help?

All This Pain And Misery

You will see all this pain and misery.

Of all what you put me through. Just look at what you've done to me. I thought that you loved me and you would always be there. So, please tell me why you did this for at trully is not fair.

You said you would not have. You said we would never die.

I thought we would last for ever at least I know I tried.

Some day you'll learn your lesson for you're the one to blame.

Your life has changed. It turned around, you'll never be the same.

The love you had just would come back. These words I say are true. I want to say that you're history. Don't try again 'cause we're through.

Now you want me back and I say that 's just too bad for the love you knew just won't come back and for that you should be glad.

-Rudy

From The Beat: Well done! If this person doesn't deserve your heart, then you should move on with your life. What do you have plan for your life? What's next after getting out? These things are really important to know!

If I Could See Myself

Other's don't see who I really am, if I could see myself through their I would see a young man struggling caught up in a crazy life, trying to find a way to get back to his lil one's, some one who cares about helping others and protecting everyone close to him also loving them, and last but not least someone who gives and loves to earn respect.

All people up in the court room and streets see me as dangerous. Since I was very small I had these thoughts and guess what because of them saying it to me so much I am now a danger.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: How did you get caught up in this crazy life? Educate us. So you have a "lil' one"? What must you do to become a player in the lil' one's life? The time is now to retire the old image and focus on being the good man you know you can become. The names and words are just that, don't allow them to dictate who you are and can become! Be the bigger man!

This Young Man

If I was to take a look from the outside looking in I would see a 17 year old young man that is doing better than some but worse than others. I would also see a young man that is in need of better decisions. I think that some people see me as a good for nothing trouble maker. But if they took the time to get to know me they would see that I'm just a regular kid that has been through some bad things and that has seen some bad things.

Well Beat with that being said, stay up and stay strong. I should be leaving to the Ranch soon so we will see how that goes.

-Worm

From The Beat: Like most young people incarcerated, you have a chance to live a life free of incarceration or continue down this downward spiral of pain and sadness. The time is now to make better decisions.

My Mom

Mom's the one that's been there for me since day one
when I was sick and when I was sad and mad.
Happy or glad she always will be there for me even
when things are all bad
like right now that I need her
my dad died and she's sick with the same thing that
he died from
that's it for today and wish the beat good luck
with all your problems.

-Steven

From The Beat: Steven, we wish you and your family the best, especially your mom and her health. Take care and best of luck with the future!

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

What it do Beat? When people look at me, I think they see a gangster. A straight up gangster, but people don't know how I look on the in side 'cause to be real, I'm a cool ninja if you get to know me.

I like to have fun and play around with the homies, but at times I got to put on that hard face. When some people see me, they think I'm going to rob them or even kill them.

I got to admit that I've done some bad things in my life. I'm not a bad person, plus, it's not easy growing up in San Jose.

One day, I would like to walk down the street with my friend and not see people move across the streets. Some people would never think I go to church, but I go a lot and they wouldn't think. I help out people I don't know ever now, but I do. If people are not my enemies, I wouldn't have a reason to run up on them. My time is up.

-Jp

From The Beat: Because of the way you dress, the place you hang out and people you hang up with, they are always going to labeled negatively. You do positive activities, but you are also still doing other activities that get you into the position where you find yourself at this minute. You need to choose whether you want to do one of those things or else you will end in the same position over and over again. That's for sure! It's your call!

My Uncle

I have a uncle named Fidel, he's 35 years old and he's still act like a little kid but my uncle is not retarded or stupid he's ok he's just like a lil' kid he plays and he says weird things. He is immature always childish. Well I can't really say nothing because he makes me laugh he is a firme ass uncle well that's all...

-Shaggy

From The Beat: You like your childish uncle and that's all that matters. Then again, we hope he is responsible enough to handle his business when the time calls to be serious. We also hope you grow up quickly and follow your probation so you do not fall further into the system!

My Mommy Is Better Than Yours!

My mom has always been there for me, I love her for that, no matter how much trouble I get into she is always there to help me get out of it.

I wish I could be home with her on this special day but consequences are bad, and I hope to make it up to her when I get out by staying out of trouble...Well, like I said, I think my mom is better than anyone's.

I just want to wish a very Happy Mother's Day to all the moms locked up. I don't know any of you but I really hope you get out soon to be with your kids. Much love ....Gone!

-Cristian

From The Beat: If you were home with your mom, what would the two of you do? What would you talk about? How are you going to make up for lost time?

Get In The Game Before You Get Caught

Somebody always told me there is a hundred ways to make money,
but when they told me that I was just thinking about dope so that's what I did,
I started to sell dope, but don't get me wrong it is fast money
that's why you start you never want to finish,
that's why when I did, I got caught,
so selling dope gave me a lesson that I'm never going to forget
because I was getting' rich,
by me saying that doesn't mean go head and do it
because you will always get caught,
it's only a matter of time and I didn't have nobody to tell me
what is right and what is wrong,
but by me doing that it gave me more game that I never had,
by me saying that, I mean street smarts.

-Street Smarts

From The Beat: So do you know the other 99 ways to make money? Are they legit? With the street smarts you have, now you can leave that old life style and move on, 'cause this lifestlye is one big deadend.

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

When people look at me, I think that they see a no good hoodlum, an' a thief, a criminal, some person who breaks laws.

I wish they saw me as a respectful young man who carries himself as good as I can. But, honestly, I don't know how staff or normal people look at me when they see me.

-C

From The Beat: Who are these people that see you and say, or there goes that hoodlum? What will it take for your community to change their thoughts about you? For your information, this all rests on you C.

Mother's Day

Mom, I'm sorry that I'm in here.

I love you, Mom.

When I get out of here, I'm going to do good for you and me and our family.

Thank you, Mom, for being in my life and struggles for good and bad.

Mom, I want to say I love you and miss you, and I'm going to make you proud of me. Happy Mother's Day. The love that never dies—it is my mother.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: Wow, not just you but many of us locked up sure put our mother's through a lot of pain and sadness and then the regret and guilt is huge on our end as we sit incarcerated. What's your plan to staying out and rejoining your mom in the free world?

Sometimes Mother

My mom crazy
Some time we be blazing
Some times my friend
Wish they had a mom like mine
Sometimes I wonder
How could my mom raise a family of nine
Sometimes my mom think about the way we dress.
But still she tell all her kids that were blessed.
That's why my family walks with their head up high.
Sometimes my mother has my dad by her side
But my mom will always know
She will always have her 9 kids by her side ready to ride.

-Taz

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you can't do no wrong with your mom. She raised nine children, not an easy task. What is it like to be in a household of nine children? What about you being away from home, how does this play out with you and your family?

Mother's Day

My mother is the best. Well to me that is. She has been there by my side through them ups and downs. Also, she would always tell me, "mijo do this do that."

I would say, "screw that."

The past three mother's day I have not been out to spend it with her. But mom you are appreciated and loved, by the one who hurt you the most. Ma I'll make it up to you some how some way but you're the best mother for this me. Te amo(I love you).

-Ef

From The Beat: You have missed plenty of quality time with your mom, what's the problem? Why can't you stay out? What draws you back into the system, when you should be free?

Another Day In Juvenile

How's it going Beat?! Me? I'm alright.

Well today I'm writing about another day at the hall. It's boring! I hate waking up after a dream of being home with my family and friends. One of the things I dislike the most is having to follow the rules from someone that isn't even a parent.

And the food! Yuck!! I'm tired of those fake so-called eggs! I miss my mother's pancakes, French toasts with real over easy eggs and bacon! Mm-hmm!

I also miss my soft queen size bed with two big puffy pillows and my thick king size blanket, but what I miss the most is my family and friends that I consider my family. Well I'm gonna finish this with an alrato and a God Bless you to all.

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: You know what you like and what you miss, so what will it take from you to stay out of juvenile hall?

My Homies . . . .This Is How I Know They're True

Homies to me are my family, not because they are down to go to a rumble with me, not because they're down to get high, drink up and clubbin, not because they're down to get revenge on someone who did something to me, because they treat my mother as their mother, because when one of my family members pass away they would shed a tear too, because when I want to change for the better they wouldn't be mad at me and understand my decision, why homies are more than homies they're my family whose been with me through thick and thin and when I say through thick and thin, I really mean it....all my homeboys..I love y'all.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: This is a nice piece about your friends who want to see the best for you. Sounds like these are lifelong friends that want you to change your ways so you can return home. Tell us about your friends. Who are your close friends. Are they blood family too? What makes them best friends?

Two Perspectives

(The Judge)
let's give him life and see how much of that he enjoys
he thought he was real slick messin' around with his boys
a menace to society is all we see
now tell me is there anyone in this room that really disagrees
that he ain't no good in the society that he lived in
told he was coo' sippin' on that juice and gin
ha what an idiot for slippin so hard
now let's se how he likes life on the yard
his mom try to teach him good and put him on a right course
but by the way he looks I ain't gonna show no remorse.

(Homeboys)
Wait a minute, I'm just sixteen
I wasn't just gonna sit there and get jacked by that fiend
what was I suppose to do
if you had time to look at my life, then maybe they'll had a clue
how hard it is out here to live and do good
when you're surrounded by a whole family that's' cravin' for food
I want them to take time and see the real me
I'm just like everyone else just trying to survive
Getting' an education and livin' to strive
for the life I never had
even though it made my momma sad.

-Chimy

From The Beat: We don't think judges like to hand out to young people life setences, but we think the choices young people make and the way the laws are in place the powers that be have no choice in the matter, which really sucks. Sure we all make assumptions about people by what we read, but in truth once we get to know a person there's a big difference than one report or two. So, if life is not in your cards, lucky you, so now is the time to break the stereotypes and show the homies there is more to you than just chillin' and getting into trouble. It's not too late to make your mother proud, do it!

My Mother

Warm greeting. First of allow me to send my utmost love y respeto to all that read this piece. And now to this missive at hand and in full.

Well today I'm going to write about "Mother's Day." What I think about my mom is I think she is the most wonderful person in the world and I hope she knows and forgives me for my bad decisions I have made in the past. And that I lover her with all my heart.

We may all have different perspective views of our Mothers but I hope you feel the same way I do about mine because she gave us the best present we could and that is LIFE. Much love and respect.

-Mono

From The Beat: What makes your mom wonderful? What bad decisions did you make? Why should she forgive you? Reinforce your statements with some thoughtful examples!

My Mom

My mom is my number one lady. She's always there when I need her. Even when I treat her bad she is still loyal and always wants what's best for me. Hopefully when I get older I can pay her back for some of what she's done, but I'll never be able to pay back all of what she's given to me.

-Mickey

From The Beat: What has your mom given you? We know what you have given her, you've given her plenty of sadness and pain by your very poor choices that brings you here.

People See Us, But They Don't Know Us

Looks is everything
People see us, but don't know us
Yet, people judge us
I don't know why they do
But I think they try to be better than us

I could tell them something
But I don't
Because if I do
Then I would lose
And they would win

-V

From The Beat: You mean to tell us you do not look at one person and judge? Good for you if you don't, given too many of us sure as hell do. As for the motives to judging, that we can't answer. And how does talking to these people cause you to lose? Educate us Raul! We see you talking your reals as being very empowering and educational.

It Pains Me To See

It pains me to see myself back in here
I hate it so much that I'm in pain
But there is nothing to do
But wait for my court date
But back in here is not only pain for myself
It's pain for the people I know
And the ones who love me the most
My family is in pain and I hate it so much
And it pains me to see that everybody's in pain
And it drives me insane

-V

From The Beat: Can you describe the pain? It's an awful pain you write about too. The pain obviously is contagious given you matter to so many people in your world and when you find yourself in such a place of course the pain is felt by all. So we aask, what is your plan to bringing happiness to those in your world?

You Don't Know Me!

These people don't know me—the judge, DA and my PO—they just go by what they see or by what they read. You know they ain't here to help us, they just want to lock us up and throw away the key.

Well, I got some news for you—every time you lock us up, we just get physically bigger and stronger, and we get mentally stronger and we end up not giving a damn. So when you read this, 'cause I know you people do, think twice when you're getting ready to give us our sentences, that you're really just helping us. Your sentence ain't stopping me from banging, because I ain't no wannabe.

-Bad Boy

From The Beat: That's the pain of the criminal justice system BB. The folks who are now in charge of your life do not really know you. When are you going to stop giving your life away to this slave chamber? IS this how your momma wants you to live your life? Of course not. Tell us how you are getting mentally stronger? If that's the case, then we bet you are never going to set foot in the system again once you regain your freedom, because you finally get it and see the set up.

Getting Blame When Not Guilty

Beat, today I was getting blame for something I didn't do. I think that's messed up because I haven't done anything. They are saying that it was me the one that did it.

So to everyone that gets in trouble for what they didn't do. That's really messed up because the person that didn't do it is getting in trouble for the person that actually did it. So don't trust anybody that you think you can trust because those are not true friends. Don't trust anybody, 'cause you might get blame for other actions.

-Juan

From The Beat: Stay away from those who are troublemaker! You need to avoid them if you want to make it out of this place. Can that be a possibility? Focus in using this time to make things better for you, to think about new possibilities that can make you live a better life.

Mother's Day

Well, I can't say my mom is better or worse than anybody else's mom,
I ain't no one to judge people's moms,
but what makes my mom a great mom—she is there no matter what –good or bad.
She don't care what it is I need, she is there when I ask her to be there for me.
And even though I mess up, she don't put me down more; instead she points out my mistakes
Well, I thank my mom for loving me an' being there for me.
Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there and 'specially to my wonderful mother.

-Oll

From The Beat: You are one fortunate son Oll. Is it fair that you take great advantage of her love? Of course not! So we ask, when are you going to take responsibility for your actions and in the end make your mother proud?

Through Their Eyes

I don't know what people see when they look at me.
Same people just see a normal guy.
If people looked at my record and my school record they could tell I was a bit messed up. People don't see my struggle in trying to make good in school or at home, as well as in my probation.
The police see a "gangster" just by the way I dress and look, even without wearing a color.
Some people see the smile on my face and think I'm soft.
People are gonna think what they want even if they really know you.

-Who are you?

From The Beat: Regardless, only you know who you are and as long as you are satisfied that's all that matters, but we bet in the end, you are looking for a big change. Best to you!

My Mother

Mother's day is coming soon, my mother loved me for whoever I was, even though she didn't like the things I did, getting arrested, doing drugs disrespecting her house. She knew I still had the goodness inside of me I had when I was younger she never gave up, after all the shhh I've been through and when I fell, she was behind me to pick me up.

I caused her so much pain. I can never pay her back for what. She has done for me, but I will never stop trying to pay her back….because now I understand! I love you mom.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: Sounds like you have woken up, good for you. So, you may never pay her back, but at least you wil take steps towards making her proud of you.

What I See Through Their Eyes

Through their eyes I would see a menace to society, a gangsta, a ruthless person. The reason why I say this is because I really don't care for nothing, and if I don't like you, I disrespect you.

I got my name blasted on my neck. I'm always breaking the law. I beat people up just 'cause they wear a certain color. I do drugs and I'm an alcoholic. Every day I'm with a new girl. I know what I do is wrong, but I can't help it and I don't care. That's what I see through their eyes.

Well, to all, stay up and don't be like me, because you will give your life to the system.

-Most Vicious

From The Beat: So are you writing that most of what people see in you is who you really are, Most Vicious? While you defend the person you are, you don't seem to be very proud of yourself. Why don't you just leave people you don't like alone, instead of disrespecting them? Has a girl just hung with you, then left you alone? How did it feel? Do you truly like any of these girls? Why are they so dispensable? Do you treat your homies as if they don't matter to you, too? What about your family? Do you care about them? What has happened to your heart? We see the love and respect deep inside, the time is now to let it flow out of you! Best!

Dear Judge

Now tell me the situation
Why don't you tell me how much time
I'm gonna be facin'?
I think that if you would stop
Cupcakin' with the DA
Then maybe, just maybe
I would of got sentenced already
But y'all is doin' us shady
Takin' all of our parents' money
Wastin' up all of my time
Fo' some lil' ass crime
My first offense
First time in juvie hall
But I guess y'all felt
Y'all had to try us as adults

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: Sometimes it happens that the longer a case takes to work through, the more lenient your sentence may become. That's not guaranteed, but it can work in your behalf. Meanwhile, can you consider--do you have any responsibility in getting tried as an adult? Don't downplay the offense, obviously it is serious enough to have you where you are today.

Who Do You Think I Am

Well most people don't' know shhh 'bout me but how I act. I tend to keep it real cuz ain't no other way to be in life I know that's one thing people see. Another thing is I'm a money hungry ninja. Man, I just can't help it, I fiend fo' that green the way I see it if you aint got paper ain't no point in livin'. How you gon' be broke struggle in this day and age?

The most important thang that I think people can see is the love I got for my family, Without them I ain't shhh and that's on the real. From my pops to moms my sisters an' especially my big bro and cousin, they the ones taught me the game and I love 'em fo' that.

-Boodah

From The Beat: If you still fiend for the green, what are you going to do to get the green? Are you going to push the envelope and live life on the edge breaking the law? Or, are you going to take the proper steps to earning money legitly? Your call. In the name of your family, do what's right!

I'm In Adult Court

Damn, they tryin' to do an uso dirty, talkin' 'bout they wanna send me straight to the pen. I looked at my defender and said, "Whaaaaat? They ain't even gon' think about sending me to Alternative or CYA? " And he said, "Nope, they want you going to the pen."

I was like, "Damn, like that? I ain't never been to the Ranch. Why they ain't gon' send me there?"

And he said, "Look where you at. You in adult court."

Then I was thinkin' in my head, "Forget it, though. Send us to the pen."

Then I went back to my unit, talking to myself like a dummy, saying, "You' dumb for getting caught. It's yo' fault you in this position, but, damn, it's my first time in here and been in here fo' 'bout a year and five months, and I go back July 30th."

Well, to make the whole story short, they doin' me wrong and all I gots to says is, "It is what it is." Sa love.

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: From adult court the judge can sentence all of you to the Ranch or other alternative places, not just YA or state prison. But isn't the question you should be asking yourself why you did whatever you did that brought you inside? Not telling yourself how stupid you are that you got caught? We urge you to never be satisfied and never give up on your self or getting your freedom back! Fight for your rights! Ask questions, learn about the system and don't just chill and wait until court and put your life in the hands of your attorney. Do your part! Get smart!

See Me

I don't know what people think when they see me. I do know that people believe a lot of shhh they hear. On the case that got me in here, the kid who I beat up, his dad went to the newspaper in my town and told them what happened. He made the case a huge deal. It ended up in the newspaper where I live. I haven't read it, but from what I hear, it's a lot of bull.

When I get out, I don't know what they are going to see of me. All I know is that I'm gonna try to clear some shhh up, and I hope they see me.

-G

From The Beat: Clearing some shhh up we hope means living a life free of incarceration, free of problems and becoming a model citizen in your city. The time is now to move on and not dwell on hearsay or the past.

Grandma

My grandma is like my mom and to me she's the best because even though I've messed up she's always by my side and always believing in me and now I can change for her and for myself.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Do it for your family, for yourself! How much more suffering will you put yourself through, let alone your grandmother?

Can't See Our Struggle

No one see's the struggle's we go through but the trouble.
So we all say "who are they to judge me"
they don't live the life I live.
They don't know what I'm about or what kind of person I am
some people just judge off appearance or your attitude.
Everyone is different.
People judge me everyday I really don't trip because I know who I am
I really don't' care 'cause I'm on my own hype doing me.

-V-ruz

From The Beat: We hope you being you will keep you safe and free of further problems. Tell us of yoru struggles. Tell us of the trouble. Tell us who you are! We are listening!

Once

I once was true to the life
I was a soldier
I was not giving up
to be a gangster
Living my crazy life like us Chicanos be saying
Viva La Raza
Taking care of little homitos
Watching their backs
Seeing our jefitas crying
Just because one of us got shot
And she says, please stay out of gangs
One of these days you're going to end
Up in the pen or underground
She cries and begs to me
Get out of that bad life,
don't you want to be something in life
I don't know
but what I know is I love you and I'll pick you over gangs.

-Angie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well, this is huge, we hope you are strong enough to live a life free of the gang life. It is not going to be easy, but in the end you will truly be at peace. Work on a game plan that keeps you busy. Consider furthering your education, getting a job, hanging around people that want to see you succeed!

Mother's Day

Well. Beat it's your girl baby D. I want to stay is I don't think about Mother's Day because my mom left me when I was 2 year old.

-Baby D.

From The Beat: And who raised you? What do you think of the person(s) who brought you up?

Mothers

My mother is a single parent
And raised me and my brother's and sisters
All alone we struggled back then
we been through a lot
no matter what my mother always tried
making sure there's a place we stay
with food in our stomach
my mother is very understanding and loving.
She's always helping and caring for others.
Happy Mother's Day I love you and sorry I can be there with you
I appreciate everything you've done.

-V-ruz

From The Beat: So this is the way you show your appreciation? By being locked up? We hope you get your life together so you one day can be like your mother to your family one day.

Mother's Day

My mom and me have been through some shhh. From her being with her idiot boyfriend to me ending up in Juvenile hall. It's funny though 'cause all this time I thought my moms was against me and how I thought the only one who was their for me was my girlfriend.

Now that I'm here, locked up, man, mom's the only one writing me and visiting me. I love my mom a lot and thank God everyday that she didn't give up on me.

I love you mom and when I get out hopefully we can have a better life than before. Hope to see you soon! Happy Mother's day!

-Ashley

From The Beat: This incarceration may simply be a blessing, and if you take it as an eye opener then this time you have given the system - the work you have ahead of yourself to get totally out of jai - is well worth it. Play it smart. Work with your mom. Talk to her, listen to her and hopefully your communication will truly improve. She has your best interest too.

My Persona

When I'm walking down the street the people that know what I did but not who I am see me as a scary, mean, cute, big boss, criminal. I see myself as cute, nice fun to be around, kick back, leader.

Being in Juvie hasn't changed my life, my life was change when I saw three of my friends die, but after I committed the crime, way after.

All I can say mom now is "Damn, where I might go, what did I do?"

Most people think there should be less blocks on my walls, I do and don' t agree, I agree because I know I scare little kids, men, women, cops, PO's, citizens, and even my own family. I disagree only because I have a family, I am sorry for what I did, but there ain't nothing I can do about it. But it's those people that know me for what I've done, and for what I wouldn't do again, I'm sorry. I'm changing everyday, more and more time I think about what I'm going to do and be to my younger sister and two older brothers. Still waiting for my sentence to begin.

-Richard

From The Beat: OK Richard, we cut out the charges you spelled out in this piece, no need to put your case out there like that. We get it, you are struggling to better yourself. Well, what's the plan to better your life? Do you have one? Hope so. We sense you are sorry, but now you must put your words into action and behave appropriately in the community! Do it!

Mid-June

Aye, what up, Beat? Well, just wanted to say a few things I am about a month away from my court date. It is also gonna be six months for me. I've been waiting for six months to get released from this dump.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm locked up for some shhh I didn't do! Well, I'm in here for a murder charge that happened a year ago. I've been thinkin' a lot, now that I'm in a cell by myself. My whole case doesn't make any sense. The cops caught some of the real people who did the crime and I'm still here.

My attorney the other day asked my dad if I was gonna "sue the county" when I get out. But my dad told my attorney, "No," so I don't know if the DA is talkin' to my attorney and askin' these questions. I know that the DA knows that I'm innocent! So now my two other boys and I gotta stay locked up. Hopefully I get out soon!

Well, Beat, thanks for listening to what I had to say! Sorry, I just wrote what was on my mind! Well, Beat, see you next week. Late.

-Thirst

From The Beat: Plenty going on in your head, well maybe by the time this comes out you will be home. We hope the best for you Thirst. It is a pleasure knowing you and we hope to hear more from you in the free world when released.

Dear Mommy

First of all let me start this letter with much love and respect towards your way and my apologies to you and tell you thank you for everything you have done for me mom I love you with all my heart and soul.

Mommy you've been there through thick and thin for me, when ever I needed you in my life. I'm sorry for messing up so much and putting you through hell! I wasn't thinking at the time how much I was hurting you mom.

Now that I'm locked up again everything is getting harder for me mom because I'm realizing how much I've made you cry and I'm an adult now! I'm 18 years old it's not a game for me no more. I got to take it seriously and finish school and I'm a do that just for you mommy and this is coming deep from my heart. I'm gonna put a smile on your face and start a new life with you I promise mommy. I love you.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: You sure put your mother through plenty, how much more will she take? Why not make this the day you start showing her and yourself some respect!? Remember action speaks louder than words, and if you find yourself slipping, ask for help, don't run-a-way from your problems!!

Mommie Day

The person I consider my mother is my great aunt she is my guardian. She is the best mother ever. I love her with all of my heart, and she has took me in from day one.

I got taken from m my biological mom the day I was born because she admitted to using crack cocaine during her pregnancy.

I was premature. I am lucky to be alive I was only two pounds at birth. Anyways let me get back at why my mother is the best! She took me in from day one. She was there for me when I first got locked up. She was there for me when I went to the ranch. She was there for me when I went to YA alternative and she's still here for me now. She never gives up on me and she never did I love her and appreciate her to the fullest she is the best mom ever!

-Jeannie

From The Beat: So do you want to put her through the pain if you unfortunately have to go to CYA or prison? Don't put her or yourself through such a stress. The time is now to make big changes in your life. Where do you start? What must be addressed first?

Look At Me!

Look at me!
I'm a thug
I'm a warrior
I'm a savage
I'm an enemy to many
I am loved by few
Look at me!
I am an animal
I am a menace
I am a "gang member"
Tell me what you see
They treat me like
I'm not even a human being
I sat in the courtroom
While they told my mother lies
I sat in that courtroom
As they made my mother cry
That's the type of shhh
That make me not wanna try
But then you would win
Then you can tell more lies
That'll eventually land me in the pen
Tell me I'm a loser
Tell me I'm a failure
Tell me I'll lose
It just makes me wanna fight
To be more than you
See, what you don't know is
I am a prince
I look at my mother as my queen
I'm going to rise higher
Than any of you ever seen
You're right about a couple of things
I am a warrior
I am a soldier
I am an enemy to many
But you're wrong
I'm loved by a great amount
When I die
You will hear the trumpets sound
'Cause I am determined
To put every lie you told to me and my mother
To shame
I'm bound by fame
I'm going to make it!
So you're gonna need to learn
How to take it!
Now look at me
And tell me
What do you see?
Look at me!

-Jaws, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We'll miss your poetry in our class, but we suspect we'll hear from you in CYA. You have a great gift, and we can only hope you'll continue to spread the knowledge through your art, poetry. This piece speaks volumes when it comes to this week's topics. Excellent writing.

You Can't See Me

People don't really know who I am because this place won't let me be who I really am. The way I'm seen in here is like a weenie because I don't get more time.

Even in the outs I'm scared of bringing out the real me because I don't want to end up in this place and that's what I did. Anyways people see me as a vato de respeto and that's the way I am. Sometimes I wish they could really see the real me so I can take a look at their eyes. And see how they really going to see me and not judge me.

-Player

From The Beat: Are you really a player? Tell us who you are? Who is the real you if it is not the young man in the hall or the young man on the streets?

Other People's Eyes

When I see myself in other's eyes in some I see that I am good kid and I chose a bad path to walk. In others I see that I am a bad kid that is getting even worse, because I chose to be in a group that smokes and makes money in a way that involved drugs. I want to see myself as a young man that is being the best he can.

-Michael

From The Beat: Well, the choice is yours on how you want to be portrayed. The ball is in your court once you get out!

Killer Dreams

I awake from a deep sleep
Hop up out my sheets
And wonder why I can't escape the streets
Even when I lay my head down to sleep
Covered in a cold sweat
And my nerves still haven't calmed down yet
I keep thinking 'bout how me and my victim's eyes met
Gotta change my ways
I feel I am leadin' myself to an early grave
By the way I act and behave
Gotta do it fast befo' its to late.

-Tee

From The Beat: Absolutely Tee, if not, you can kiss your freedom goodbye. You know the road you must take, do you have the courage to jump on board?

My Mom

What makes my mother a good mom
She is loving and caring and she cooks
Food for the family,
she always ask me how
Was my day she buy me things.like
She don't buy me shoes or nothing because I buy
My own shoes,but like when I ask her to
Stop at a place to buy me something to eat
She would do that and also she come to visit
Me whenever I ask her too.

-Maro

From The Beat: So your mom will do just about anything for you. So what if she tells you to stop this nonsense of living the incarcerated street life, will you?

Should I?

Before you think 'bout committing another crime
Think how you will get away.
Once you doubt it
more chance you will get caught
so plan it before you do it.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Why plan another crime? Why not plan a future free of crime!

Let's Trade Places!

Do you wish you was me?
'Cause I wish I was you
You say my life is easy
And I say that ain't true
Do you wish you was me?
'Cause I wish I was you
I don't think you could take a day
Tryin' to live in my shoes
If you was livin' in my shoes you'll probably get stirpped
If I was livin' in yours I'd probably be rich
By bein ' on TV gon' stupid
dumb, skits
While you walkin' down the street
Thinkin' how'd it come to this?
If you was livin' in my shoes
Would you do what I do, hit a lick every day
Or just go to school?
See me I do both and I'm very good at it.
I have robbed the corner store
While I was cuttin' all my classes
While you was studyin' hard, wearin' big bulky glasses
I throw some contacts in lookin' for some more action
And that's the difference between me and you
Now do you sincerely
Think you could walk in my shoes.

-Lil' JJ

From The Beat: Our big fear is that it's so unsafe for YOU to walk in your shoes. Remember that no matter how good you think you are at the shady life, here you are locked up, which means that the system won. Also, we know that the person you wrote this to was a counselor who was trying to talk to you about changing your life... in other words, he wants you in his shoes – his free man's shoes that walk out these doors each night, instead of county shoes in Quentin or some other hell. And with lyrical skills and wit like you display in this piece, we have to side with him on this one. You need some new shoes – Shoes that can carry you home safe.

RIP Pooh

They walked up and shot my ninja over a windshield that's messed up. RIP Lil Pooh. The littlest things make ninjas end up dead, that's messed up why they had to kill my ninja. Why ninjas wanna hate on him and make him stop shining and grinding.

-Lil' Yak

From The Beat: We bet you can name a couple reasons why Lil' Pooh is resting in peace. Don't be in denial to the problems that are happening on the streets. The time is now to see beyond the shining and the grinding!

How

How do you stay out
How do you get out
How do you live
How do you die

-Elisi

From The Beat: Each person either has a plan or doesn't. We hope we all live full happy lives and die of old age.

Is It Easier To Write About Friends or Family?

In my opinion, it is easier to write about friends, because you just know them for a while in your life, and that's it. If it's your family, you'll have to deal with it for the rest of your life. Well, you know, I would talk about my family, but I don't want the world to know. If I talk about my friends, then I don' really care if the whole world sees it – cause we just friends.

-Dearey

From The Beat: In other words, it's easier to write about things that aren't as meaningful or close to the heart. But on the other hand, if you look at the best writing in The Beat, the most moving, the most powerful, isn't it usually the one in which the writers are most honest about what's happening, or been happening, deep inside their hearts? In other words, great art (like great lives) requires great courage, and a willingness to expose true self to the world. No?

Dear Stranger

You can't judge me 'cause you don't know me.

You don't know what I done been through in my life, how you jus' gonna say I'm always gonna be a criminal, just because I'm in Juvy? That doesn't mean I'm always gonna be the same, that doesn't mean that I can't change!

-J-Money

From The Beat: It's not enough to say you can change, you have to believe it, you have to have a serious plan for how to do it.

Truth Be Told

Truth be told all this bullshhh is getting highly old
Black males always being the outcast of the crowd
Black girls always the one to be robbed of their proud
White man accused of rape and never appointed out loud

Truth be told all this bullshhh is getting highly old
Young boys and girls, little infants growing up
without a mother or father
When we ask for help our teacher tell us don't bother.
But through all the thick grass,
I've grown tall with a clearer view of life itself
and my enemies see I got taller

Truth be told all this bullshhh is getting highly old
When my eyes wander to the night's sky
and I don't see a bright future old!
All my hopes and dreams and love has been sold!
To that upper class of people, but they ain't upper
class it's supper class.
Yours enemies always feed your fire
'till you burn yo'self out
and you'll never know about the truth
Truth be told all this bullshhh is getting highly old!

-Lil' Boney

From The Beat: NOW that the BS is old, it is time to start a new, what will it be? What will you do that you never imagined yourself doing? You're smarter than you were yesterday, so use your smarts and better yourself so the life you lead is a long healthy one!

My Big Hit

What would make me change my life is an experience like a life in death situation, like a car accident, getting shot or stab. I wouldn't want to go through it again because I don't want to die or end up in jail for life so that would make me change.

-Lil' Daniel

From The Beat: Now tell us are you a changed person? Or, are you still stuck on being that someone flirting with disaster?

I wanna walk run jump scream yell holla use the bathroom, eat and leave and come back when I damn well please.

A New Me

I'm locked up
Tryna change my actions
I'm ready for mashin'
dissin' haters and homies
that I use to kick it wit'
I'm 'bout to change my life
And I ain't gone take no shhh
I'm gonna be with my family and make 'em smile
I'm dissin' anybody who disagrees.

-Lil Trip

From The Beat: Good for you! How are you going to change your life around?

Bad Boy

I feel like I'm lost
I do not exist.
My place is placeless,
a trace is traceless,
I see changin' faces
my family in caskets
ninjas in masks
murder thay asses
my city created a monster
I feel like I'm blankin' suicidal thoughts
in my head as I'm thinkin
tell me what's left
should I take my last breath
cock my glock and me deaf
why shhh can't get thru to me
I been true to the game
but the game ain't been true to me
I hear voices at night callin me a bad boy!!!

-Jesus Coleon

From The Beat: Now that you know the game is not ture, what are you going to do? Continue to be a sucker to the lifestyle that puts people six feet under or in prison cells? It's your call! You've seen the pain, the sadness, you know the stress and memories that you carry.

Who I Am

I can always know who I am and I will always know what I'm capable of. There are times in my life when I only think negative -- "When you left I lost a piece of me" (Rest in Peace Armon Green, Demetrius Zigler, and Da'Von Livingston).

But then I think about what I've come from, "If at first you don't succeed, dust yourself off and try again.:

I'm that "one in a million" that's been through something that others haven't when I get past this small inconvenience and grow with my career I wanna be able to "throw some D's on that thing" I wanna go to the clubs with no problems, "rock my hips" and "pop lock and drop it" I wanna "meet someone at the altar in my white dress" I wanna be a "good luck charm."

When I get my freedom back I wanna let it burn.

I wanna walk run jump scream yell holla use the bathroom, eat and leave and come back when I damn well please.

I wanna do me, in a positive way. The song I dedicate to my freedom is Chaka Khan's, "Through the Wire, "because "for the chance to be with you I'd gladly give it all."

These are my feelings on paper, and I pray that my dreams come through really soon, because I can do the impossible if I put my mind to it. To everybody that's locked up to read this, too much power and respect to you, keep yo' head up and when you get free stay solid, the right way.

And this one slides on ice.

-Nu Nu the System Victim

From The Beat: We love this crazy collage, how you put together all the different words and quotes that have mattered to you, given you strength, helped you make sense of the world. And yes – you do deserve all those privileges of freedom, the right to run and do what you need to do you. So tell us now, break it down, when you say "do me but in a positive way", what kinds of activities make up that positive you?

What's Good Wit It Beat

I was in the halls in San Francisco, but now I am in the halls in Oakland. This hall is messed up. The hall in the city was cool. You can't do nothing here, I want to go home so bad.

Remember to love yo' mama, 'cause if it was not for her you will not be here so respect yo mama and tell her that you love her every time you see her.

-Domo

From The Beat: The hall is not a place to have fun, remember it is suppose to be challenging and uncomfortable. You have a problem if you think a hall is cool, what is cool is going home and being with your mother!

Transmit Information Of The Earth

Chapter of the devil that floats the streets
I rock the paper as I rock to beats
Transmit words from the soul I express
This madness on earth is a big ass test

Speaking under your breath isn't fair
The devil isn't out there to give you a care
Receive signs if the light that heals
It's the Lord's hands you feel

Chemicals in my brain isn't focus on living
Stopping my life from the Lord's givings
The devil is treating me as a fool
And the Lord telling me that ain't cool

It depends on your mind system that signal you the right way
The devil will try to stop you on your way
Transmit information from the earth that will stay
I'm gonna follow the Lord everyday

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: We support your desires effort in finding a new way to live Papa. Yes indeed leave the devil's thoughts outside and bring in your God who will shed you with loving light. Tell us more about your God!

I have many people willing to help me with anything that I need help with. Well (I hope) this is gonna be my last piece I write to The Beat because I ain't ever comin back to this place or incarceration period.

God Knows My Heart

Forget what somebody think about me. Hated by very few, loved and respected by all. Naw, as far as I know it, people take favor to me on the outs. But people at times look at me like I'm not human, and I don't deserve to get another chance.

I don't have the slightest clue of what the rest of the world thinks of me. Everybody who really knows me will tell you how cool of a person I am.

As far as the judge and DA are concerned, they probably think I'm a menace. But God knows my heart. I never heard the DA in court say nothin' downgrading about me, I don't really care if someone thinks I'm a thief because of the color of my skin or because of the way I talk.

If I could see through someone else's eyes, I wouldn't judge me at all, 'cause everyone messes up.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: The self-confidence in this piece is great. No matter what, if you know your own worth you can get through the darkest times? So now to flip the script, do you ever judge other people who don't deserve it? Decide their weak because of the crime they committed, or fake because they act tougher than they are.

Secret Lover

Every night as the sun seems to fade
You my secret lover it's our bodies we seem to trade
Creeping in and out of our window at night
Your secret lover gone keeping your body feeling just right.

Kissing you from your head to feet
Most of my friends wish you are the woman they'll meet
Touching you from top to bottom sweet and soft,
Close your mouth and let me take your clothes off

I'm that secret man that you will dream about all day
Lets hold hands and kiss our nights away
Moan in my ears as I lick you down
This is the secret lover sound....

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Heat. Love is in the air. We hope you and your secret lover will one day embrace

A Great Opportunity Coming

I been in here for two months and I'm finally gonna get a release to go home. I feel like this is a great opportunity for me to be successful in my life. I've had enough time to think about what I did and how I'm gonna avoid a situation like that one again.

I've changed my mind set in here and I've made promises to myself that I'm gonna try as hard as I can to achieve my goals and be successful. Which I know that I can, because I'm a very strong minded person and I can step out of my comfort zone if I want to.

Also because I have many people willing to help me with anything that I need help with. Well (I hope) this is gonna be my last piece I write to The Beat because I ain't ever comin back to this place or incarceration period.

So Beat, you really help youth think about their future with pieces in your Beat publication. I'm gonna keep in touch with you guys. God bless all incarcerated and those Beat workers. I'm out!

-Juan

From The Beat: Where ever you go keep The Beat in mind. You too have touched a lot of people with your thoughtful pieces, we hope your writing doesn't slow down when you leave. Stay in touch and educate the readers from what you are and have experienced.!

Smile Now and Siempre

When I feel like I ain't worth nothing,
it is because the people that I love ain't there no more,
but what should I expect if I never gave them love!
Now it's too late,
but everything that I see is just so fake,
with a lot of hate,
but I was looking just for love and attention,
didn't know what was going on,
until now that I am all alone,
people talk and judge me when they don't know anything about me,
people look at you and they judge you,
when inside of you nothing is like you,
just because I get attention from the stranger,
the person who always listened to me,
actin' crazy,
but I didn't see it,
because he had something I needed.
Now that I look back this is not what I wanted.

-Angel

From The Beat: Through incarceration you my friend, over a matter of weeks, have come to an amazing realization Angel about what is important in your life and what is not. You have intelligence, smarts, use it young man, for your child, for your family!

Day Dream In Room

I daydream in my room about my life
what I'm going to be doing
how I might do it.
I daydream about what my future might be like
what I might try to do.
what I think about is I'm going to go back in do the same thang
or I'm going to stop doing what I was doing.
I think about the day I'm gone get out and what I'm going to do soon as I get out.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Well Marcus you have two choices the day you get out, one is to fall back into the trap, or two, live anew and be a productive young man in the community. WE know it is going to take great strength to change your ways, but if you really want to avoid the system you will do just about anything. So tell us how do you see your future when you return home?

Life

I wanna be free,
free from this hall.
I can't stand it here no more,
all I do is eat, sleep, read, watch movies and TV
and look out my window.
I just want to take a walk down the street free
I want to see my girl and I can't.
Keep pushing and never stop if you desire it the most
freedom is what I seek the most,
when I was free I was seeking pleasure and reputation.
I was a fool and the first mistake I made was taking a puff of that weed and a sip of that drank.

-Elisi

From The Beat: It all starts somewhere, and obviously you see where your problems stem from. We hope you have the strength to break the habits and move forward.

Confusions

The longest journey begins with the first step.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Yes sir, every journey starts with a first step.

When You Act Out in Here

... It's like you puttin' on a show, for something or some reason. But it don't get you nowhere but in these rooms .I know because I did it a lot. I always used to be a showoff on the outs, but in here I was different. But all I'm sayin' is don't be a showoff because you might need that person that you showin' off on for real though, because I needed one of these staff for something and I had been showing off and said I don't care about nothing, and it was I needed a phone call to my mom and the staff remembered what I had said and he did not do a thing for me. So all I'm saying is watch what you say and who you say it to,

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: Without going into the details on this staff situation, it sounds like you're learning how to distinguish between short term (doing what your impulses tell you in the moment), and thinking long term (making sure not to burn people who have power over you). That kind of long-term thinking will do more than help you in jail; it will help you stay out of it!

Story Of A Thizz Kid

What's up, I'm back with the thizzz... I have been thizzin' since I was a young teen, but all that thizzin' took so many of my brain cells that I can't think straight now.

When I first started it was cool. No – it was the best thing I'd ever tried.

Now the stick up kid part was when I was about 15 or 16. It was cool but that became bad because I started hurtin' people and comin' here, so I stopped all of that stuff before it was too late for me to turn back. I saw all the people I hurt and put through, but I had to stop and think about that because I thought about all the people who hurt me and put me through so much pain. So that's what made me a stick up kid.

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: It sounds like the person we would have met on the street a year ago wasn't you at all – it was what the drugs turned you into. Now that you're in jail, do you feel as if you're connecting better with the real you? Because the person that comes through in your writing each week is a person who is really trying to discover who he is and what he's about. A person on a journey towards true growth!

Mother's Day

Words can't even express how I feel about my mama .
But I'll do my best,
I feel bad this is my second mothers day in the hall
I want to spend more time with my mom,
It seems like I spend more time with my mom in here at visting
'cause on the outs I'm never home.
my mom never misses a visit with me,
No matter what she's there for me
when I was younger my
Dad used to go bad on my mom used to hit on her
that made me hella mad but at that time my mom was using drugs.
now after a divorce and like six years clean of drugs,
she's the best mom to me, ever!
Talk is cheap I'm gonna show her I can change
I am never coming back
or put my mom thru no more stress
I love you mama

-Lil' K

From the Beat: For Mom we will do great things, and this is a great thing you will do for yourself and your mom. What kind of stuff do you want to do with mom? What is your plan for not being in here next year on Mother's Day?

Where My Name Came From

Being a victim is something that I have nothing to do with. I was born that way. People always tell me that I was born with two strikes, which are that I'm black and a female.

I see why now but at first I didn't. Being black is good, it has its advantages and disadvantages. The 21st century shows the advantages which are that a woman can run for president, vote, work and other things like everything being unsegregated. (At least in California). But the disadvantages are those in that I can't have respect because I'm stupid (or so they think). I am a victim of a discriminating world:

"If she's got colored braids, she's a ripper."
"She's from Oakland so she dirty"
"She goes to Castlemont, so she has Herpes"
"She went to Prescott so she knows nothing "

I'm a system victim because whether I like it or not I have to deal with Juvenile Hall, whether I commit a crime or not, 'cause some stupid thought about probation. That's why I'm a victim. But sooner or later I wont' be a victim or Nunu the System Victim. I'll be NuNu the superstar. Today is today I won't be able to change it tomorrow, so I have to be better the next day 'cause the past 5, 967 days of my life are my come and unlike Lewis and Clark I don't want to go in a circle. I want to be dimensional. Yadidi!

-NuNu The System Victim

From The Beat: The things that make you a "victim" are the things you can't control: How people respond to your race, how people judge you based on your hair color or school, etc. But the things that make you a superstar, or even just a wonderful human being are all in your control. How do you handle negativity? How likely are you to fall in love with the wrong man? How strong is your will? The young woman whose personality emerges in these pages is no victim, that's for sure. are ready for you to change your name... what will the New Nu Nu call herself?

Tired. . .

My life is not going so well since I came in Juvenile Hall, because I miss my family and friends. It's like every time I wake up I see four walls, and I'm tired of that. I'm tired of people telling me when to get up and wash my face, I'm tired of people telling me when to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I'm tired of people telling me to go to my room. I'm tired of people telling me when I could use the phone. It feels like my freedom is getting locked away once I came in the system.

But when I get out I promise I can't never come, back to Juvenile Hall, because I'm tired of being told what to do. But when May 22, 2007 comes around and I leave Juvenile Hall, they will not see my face again – unless I'm on TV getting a superbowl ring or owning my own business, or becoming a basketball player, or a rapper.

-Kenneth

From The Beat: As crazy as it sounds, it's actually great that you feel this way – even though you must have been in a miserable mood when you wrote this piece. Because once you get tired enough of the deprivation of freedom that goes with being locked up – in all these small but really meaningful ways – something in you might just kick in and say "I'm not coming back" and mean it for real this time. Do you think that's possible, that this time you mean it for real?

People Don't Know Nothin' About Me

I feel like I can't trust no one, not even my potnas that I think is real, so called potnas is quick to turn they back on you, and that's why I stay on my own two feet, 'cause ain't no one else is gonna help me be on my own two feet. I don't' care what no one thinks of me, 'cause me is me – and I'm always gonna be me, and ain't no one gonna change that, not my family, my so called potnas, not the DA the judge, and even the staff. People don't know nothin' about me, but what they see and why I'm in here.

My life is like a freeway, I live in the fast lane and fly by slow, that's why I'm in here, cause I didn't slow myself down and see what' sin head of me before I kept on going forward. I took ten steps forward, then ten steps backwards to see and know what was comin' my way, death was callin' me and I wish I could turn around and go back. But now, it's too late.

-J-Money

From The Beat: Jail is hard for a lot of reasons – one of the worst is the way the actual detainees, end up acting out on each other all the time – "frontin'" acting tough, lying about their toughness, hating on each other, when really they all cry in their rooms at night, every last one of them... you're in a situation right now when you're facing heavy time, serious losses, and the hate that seems to come with being incarcerated in this system. So it's on you to find something – writing, faith, a teacher you can trust – that will help you stay in touch with the best parts of yourself while you're locked up.

Hella Mad Part 12!

This is not the spirit at all. I go to court next week they gon' try to give me a deal before I go to and if it's sounding good I'm gon' take it, for I could get this shhh over with and get out and finish where I left at with my girl.

I was just talking to her the other day, she talking about she just got my name tattooed on her she supposed to be sending me some pictures of it for I cold see what it's looking like ya' feel me?

I'm stressin' lightweight though! I'm in here lightweight stressin', but not like that 'cause if I start stressing but not like that 'cause if I start stressing hella hard it ain't gon' do nothing but make my time harder than what it is but my girl keep my stress off my mind 'cause she's by my side right about now, not like most of these j-cats 'cause they ain't bout what they be talking 'bout for real though!

But I'm gon' holla at y'all next week

–Lil' Rome

From The Beat: By the time this piece gets printed you'll know what happened at court, and you'll know what your time is looking like, so we hope you won't be "lightweight stressin'". It's good thinking about your girl helps with the stress. What about other parts of your life? Family? Teachers? Plans for the future?

A Good Court Day

I was supposed to go home today.
These people don't want you to go home.
I hope I go home tomorrow.
I went to court very mad and came out happy.
The judge didn't want me to,
but the DA was talking about making me stay an extra month
until my next court day.
The judge didn't appreciate the DA making decisions that's not up to her.
I was hella happy but I am on EM.
I came to jail
because I got caught with two guns and ran from the police.

-Fatboy

From The Beat: What have you learned from all of this? Can you leave the guns alone? Can you stay away from the police? Can you live a life free of trouble? Only you know.

The Way of Turfs

Any day they get in some funk, they gon' ride the same night
They gon' die the same night
Believe it or not they even try to think twice
Lil' ninjas slide through yo' side on pedal bikes
Turn patches of yo' skin red like monkey bites
Deliver you some hot stuff like mountain mikes
Youngest ninjas in the hood ain't scared to take a life
Every day shootin' stuff like dice
Hollows eat yo' skin like rice
They been locked up too long
This stuff ain't right
But now it's somethin' they gotta fight
Get released and try to do right.

-Kt

From The Beat: This is a vivid and dark poem about the struggles on the street, and they way they eat at young people inside... tight rhymes, and a nightmarish vision of the turfs. You end on a sort of positive note when you say that they "try to do right."

Through Their Eyes

I would see a savage
A hustla do whatever for that cabbage
A ninja out here starvin' strivin' to live lavish
A person who has seen situations turn tragic
Somebody whose friends were alive and then gone like magic
Somebody who's seen the impossible happen
Like a baby falling out of a window – and getting flattened
A person that has been misused
Tossed through the judicial system and mentally abused
A person being watched in a box like an animal
By people that are being amused
By the struggles that I endure to survive
Or to keep from being confused.
If I could see myself through your eyes,
I would see a young man that is emotionally bruised
So when you look at me, you'll see
An intellectual being wrongfully used.

-Fat Wayne

From The Beat: We keep waiting on a new name, one worthy of your deserved fame, as a Beat seer, a mind freer, a pen that makes the world clear. Whatever the system may try to do to dehumanize you, or your peers, these words will be a weapon to fight against it – to fight for your humanity, your worth, your truth. Don't ever let it drop.

Lock Up

Being lock up from the outside is good.
But then it ain't.
being lock up from the guns and knives,
but you also is locked up from your family.
your mom sister and brothers.
Id rather be locked up at the house than be in here.
I'm not coming back to the jailhouse anymore.
Locked up has you thinking about all the
Freedom you had on the outs.
Be a leader not a follower
do you and let them do them.
You don't have to do bad things to show you hard.

-Quis

From the Beat: You go! We like this poem. We bet you have figured out how to avoid the guns and knives upon your return home too. Stay leading and being your own young man!

A Loss in My Family Due to Gang Violence

I lost my cousin at a party, because his friend got into it with some gang members, and they left the party, then came back and shot a kid with dreads who was the one they thought was talkin' shhh.

But it wasn't, it was my cousin, who was only 13 and in the seventh grade. He also had a future of wanting to be an NFL football player. Well, all that was just a dream.

And the bad part about it is that he got shot in the head, and nobody called the cops. Everybody just ran to my cousin's house and told his Mama what happened. His Mama, my cousin Annie, had a heart attack.

She lived, but she was sad to what happened to her son.

-Victor

From The Beat: We're sorry for the senselessness of your cousin's death, the waste of a future, even for the way the shooters' family's lives have also now been destroyed. Thank you for writing this piece, to memorialize your cousin, and also, to remind all of us at The Beat and in its pages, just how essential it is that we continue to fight the violence that is killing our children.

My Life

My name is Young Money
I been in and out of juvenile hall since I was eleven years old
I been shot and jumped
I am in a click, but when I get out I am going to live my life right.

-Young Money

From The Beat: How are you going to live your life right? Why now?

When People Look At Me

When people look at me they see a black young man up to no good,
which is wrong
if a lady walks pass me
while I'm with my friends and they are black too,
she will turn the other way.
What I see when I look in the mirror
I see an educated young black man
out to get money and further his life.
Money on my mind
Pearl on my phone
But that don't matter, if I ain't getting' no bones
Girls is a job
And money is a mission
Most guys just talk about politicians
If knowledge is power
Then I'm the world's strongest man
Getting money is the obstacle, and spending is the plan.

-Jack

From The Beat: If money is the mission, what 's the plan to get it, other than illegally? Do you have a plan to staying out of juvenile? Share some of that knowledge Jack! As for girls, show them some respect!

What People Think When They See Me

When people look at me they see a young Black African American
that is trying to do something with himself.

police look at not just me
but every young black male and think
that we are up to no good,
I can't even go to the store with out a cop stopping me asking a lot of questions.

when I'm at school
my teacher also look at us like I look at myself.
they tell me they want me to go to college,
finish high school and start a family.

juvenile hall counselors look at me an say that I'm a good kid
'cause when I'm in the hall I just want to do a good program and go home.

some PO's are cool but not my PO,
' cause it seems like when she see me doing good in school
getting good grades she sends me to jail,
now im going to camp 'cause she violated me
For missing three days of school.
then she told My mom she wants me to see the new hall.

When my mom looks at me she sees her one and only son.
I want to buy my momma a house
And put a new benz with a bow on it for her
In her Drive way.
my mom know that I got dreams and that I'm good with my hands.

-Young T-Face

From the Beat: That's bad, if you can't even go to the store without being questioned. How did it get to that point? You deliver a good piece. You take us into the eyes of the people who play a role in your life, if you like it or not. The time is now to show the good to all the above and move on from the new hall!

Seconds Before

You got second thoughts
You were pressured
You finally did it
Now look at the consequences

-Elisi

From The Beat: Yes, it's all bad. Time to think good thoughts!

Without a Beat

Cops and gangs forming their alliance
'Cause all these kids are full of defiance
Which leads to too much violence
And then we ask for a moment of silence?
A cycle that will never stop,
War in other countries to across your block
Won't stop 'till they drop gettin' popped
Or got caught on the spot then locked
Inside of me, yes indeed
It leaves me with hostility, no sympathy

-Jrc

From The Beat: This piece shows the thinking that goes behind a lot of the battle raps. If violence is the language of the streets, then of course violence becomes the language of the streets' poetry too. But with rhyme skills like these, your poetry could prove to be part of keeping the peace – like Boots Riley.

Don't Come Back

Get out stay out
Enjoy every second free
For it could be your last
You don't live forever
So enjoy it FREE

-Elisi

From The Beat: Nothing is free, even when yo uare free. The hardest job will be to make it in the free world, ready?

Happy Mothers Day

I was just thinking about the love ones I hurt
one of them is my
especially when she really cares about me
and I talk to her like she's one of my friends
I can tell from her eyes that she's hurt a
That makes me feel bad 'cause me and her been
Thru thick and thin together and she's really sick
Right now and I pray to god that she'll be
Alright and I just wanted to let her know that
I'm sorry for the stuff I put her through
Its gonna be mothers day and I just want to say I love you
with all my heart.

-Lil' Raskal

From the Beat: The time is now to stop treating your mom like a worthless homie and treat her with the love she deserves! Remember you only get one mom, so make her feel like the gem she is!

I'm A Flirt

I say my heart's like concrete
I never grows and fo' sho' don't beta
It can be deadly if you don't do it right
I'll move ya to the left then exit to my right
I've never held the ability to love
It wasn't in the package I received from above
The less I love, the less I hurt
The l dunno about the future, for now I'm a flirt.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: If your heart is concrete, then the smiles and spirit and poetry that flow from it must be your roses. We like to believe that no matter what you've faced, those roses will help you maintain your ability to love (especially when someone comes on the scene who is worthy of that love.) In the meantime, flirt away, just don't be afraid to let the colors bloom!

Learn

Knowledge
Peace
Love
Hate
Evil-v-Good

-Elisi

From The Beat: And what side are you on, we bet the side of love!

MARIN COUNTY

That Purple Clouds My Vision

That purple clouds my vision
Keep me lifted
Got me twisted
I'm an addict, I'll admit it
Man, I really need to quit it (Ha! Ha!)
When I roll it up and hit it
I go higher than a kite do
A violent lil' ninja
But off ganja
I won't fight you

-Trip

From The Beat: During the discussion, you said that in your family, your neighborhood, your culture, you were taught to handle problems by fighting and that you got used to it and now you enjoy it. But when you high, you don't fight? So getting high has a calming effect on you, which many claim weed to do, but what you need to figure out is how to leave the ganja and stay peaceful. Are you ready and willing? It is a big problem as to why you are here. Agree?

I Love And Hate My Mom

My mom can be a witch when she wants to. She can say I'm lying about everything when it's really her—like the one time when she picked her boyfriend's side and not mine when me and him fight. But sometimes she can be caring, but when she feels like it. Like, I love my mom, but then, at the same time, I hate her, too!

-Lupe

From The Beat: Why do you suppose that one time she picked her boyfriend over you? We need more details than what you shared with us! Maybe what's going on here is conflicting loyalties? Why do you suppose your mom is hard on you at times? Is it her love for you? We'd love to hear more from you on this. We bet in the end you have the answer, with the hope that you will be able to understand why your relationship with mom is the way it is, with plenty of room to improve.

Mom, Tell Me Everything Is Gonna Be All Right

Mom, when I'm thinking of the times
You help me when I was a baby
I be crazy
And fly away in the sky
And start to cry
Wiping the tears from my young, innocent face
Pero, I am not a fake
Disiendome (telling me) everything is gonna be all right
As you read me bedside stories at night

-Roylan

From The Beat: What you've written to your mother is so tender and beautiful. When you're free again, what can you do to make things better for her and for you? Can you stay out of here? That might be the best Mother's Day gift you could give her.

In The Mind Of A Child Is Where The Revolution Begins

If I should ever fall and get caught in a hustle
When I die I let 'em know that I died in a struggle
From the 'hood homies to rich kids caught in a bubble
In the streets and throughout the subway tunnels
Put it down and remember that we never gave in
'Cause the mind of a child is where the revolution begins
So if the solution that you look for can't be found anywhere else
Wouldn't it make sense to look inside of your self?
I used to wonder, I used to wonder
Why we wouldn't believe in ourselves?
It's because the way they portrayed us to everyone else?
They cursed us, blind of the fact that we could succeed in ourselves
I used to wonder

-Wondering Writer

From The Beat: What The Beat wants to know is why do you feel it's necessary to hustle (illegally?) to perpetuate your revolution? What does your ideal of a revolution entail? You seem like you have huge self-confidence and belief in yourself. If so, how did you see through the way "they" (the media?) portrayed your crew and yourself? If you're hustling others—weaker? More desperate? Naïve?–to survive, how will your revolution be superior to the reality that exists now?

Why They Follow Me

You know, I hate it when they be followin' me in stores. I mean, what is up with that? I think it is like 'cause I'm Russian. They hatin' on me. They think I will blow them up. I'm like a devil to them.

-Lionfishy

From The Beat: So, how do they know you're Russian? And if that's the reason they follow you around, what's the reason they follow young black men and women and young brown men and women — and generally, young people of all colors?

Mother's Day

My mother is worse than other mothers. She have a good heart but she is crazy. But I love my mom with all my heart. She treat me like I'm not her child but she love me. But I love my mother. She make my life as good as it should.

-Jacquai

From The Beat: What a strange relationship you must have with your mother. It kind of makes us sad to read this. What make you say your mother is crazy? What do you mean that she treats you like you're not her child? We think you could write a very interesting piece with lots of details, and we'd love to read it.

Without The Creator There Is No Created

I love her
I need her
But without the Creator
There is no Created
The passion is indescribable
My life is not complete
But God keeps me
On my feet
If you feel how I feel
I think we should be related
Because all the pain
Over the years I've accumulated
John 3:16 speaks about eternity
But if she's out there
I hope her spirit yearns for me
From my past I've learned to be
The deepest person
In the fish of the sea
By heart is a black whale
If you see inside of me
You would cry, you see
My pain runs deeper
Than the core of the earth
But this talent I feel
I've had since birth
Am I cursed?
How could my life be worse?
You see, time don't stop ticking
I need a rag to soak up the blood
'Cause right now, the way I am bleeding
You'll think it was flooding
Love is the strongest thing in this world
Even the Bible couldn't cure me
Even God's trying to cure me
If I ever see her
How would I plea to her?
The pain
The hurt
The accident
Damn, Darkside

-Dark Side

From The Beat: Who has caused you all this pain? There's nothing like the pain of losing someone you love, especially if you know it's forever. What can assuage this pain for you? Or are you hoping that time will somehow slowly sop up your wounds and that life will expose you to newness, and your heart will open up and love again?

The War Between Grim And Evil

While you claiming and gangbanging
I am stacking up my books
And while I am trying to survive
You worried about ya looks

You'll never understand me
So download me on your MP3
Stevie Wonder, but somehow I still see
This shhh run deeper than Roots or Chicken George
I am authentic
Y'all faker than Payless
The slave owner
Want me to work for Payless

He haunts me in my dreams
But don't worry, I am the ghost buster
Born without a mother
I hurt my brother
An I-Pod
But somebody pushed "mute"
And these demons got me thinking
That this beef shhh cute

Louis Armstrong,
But I am better on the flute
I'll kill and recycle
To stop the balance in the cycle
One day every soul will be judged
And the eyes of the innocent
Will melt your soul like hot fudge
Burn, you cowards
And watch me cry
Through this pen
For all you soft ninjas
I ride or die 'til the end
I'll put everything I got
Including my soul
In this pen
'Cause writing is life
Like the passion of Christ
But I killed him
The War between grim and evil
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: You have many intriguing images stacked on each other. Are you writing this poem to all readers out there? Who is the "he" who haunts your dreams? We can feel that you pour your soul through your pen. Keep on writing' on!

the eyes of the innocent

Will melt your soul

like hot fudge

Burn, you cowards

And watch me cry

My Mother

My mother feel good that I'm here in YGC, and at same time. she knows that I am safe from things that happen outside in the street. But I know that she feel sad about how I am taking my life.

-Guillermo

From The Beat: It is good to be safe, Guillermo, but if you can only find your safety behind locked doors, then something isn't right. Your mom knows what isn't right, and she wants it to be right for you. But only you can make it right, and make her happy.

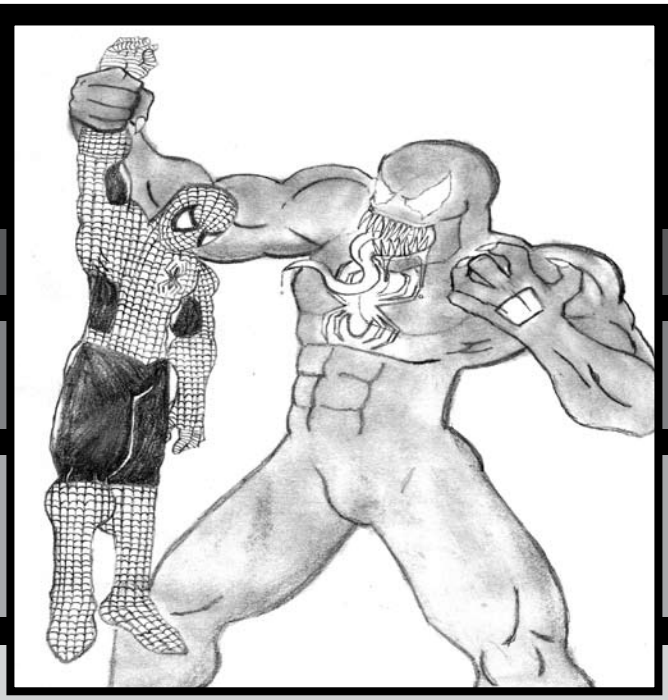
My Last Chance

Tomorrow is the day I got court. I've been in my room all day, thinkin' about what my PO had said about a possible out-of-home placement. I was in some shhh, 'cause he was right, I was followin' my dad's footsteps.

I have been in an' out of YGC, like an In An' Out Burger. I was off probation, an' now my dumb ass about to be back on, ova some dumb shhh. I felt like if I do go home, dis my last chance. I can't screw up. Well, I'm outty. Peace.

-Zoom

From The Beat: We're always interested to learn why someone would risk his freedom (again) over what he describes as "some dumb shhh." Is it because you're too young to think about possible consequences, or that you don't believe you'll get caught to face any consequences, or you don't care about yourself and your future? You are not your dad! You are you, and your life and freedom are what should be the focus of your attention. We know your dreams for the future don't include being a slave to a cold and uncaring system, so what's holding you back from stopping the behavior that puts you there?



Mother's Day

My momma is the best momma in the world. I mean, she's not strict at all, but get on her bad side or it's over. She's like my sister. We can talk about anything, and she knows how to keep a secret.

She lets me get away with a lot of things, but she's not dumb. She knows what I do out here in these streets. But all she tells me is, "Think before you act."

-C-Wezzy

From The Beat: It is a blessing to have a mother you can share secrets with, and know that you are safe. At the same time, however, allowing you to "get away with a lot of things" may not be the best way to prepare you for a life of consequences. In fact, you are now living with some of those consequences, which tells us that you didn't you didn't take her advice as seriously as you should have.

Adults Who Are Kids

I have seen a lot of adults who act like lil' kids. They do so by fighting over lil' stupid stuff like a beer or some drugs. But there are other ways that they can act childish. Like this one time when I was seven, I was at Great America I got in line for a ride called Tazmanian Devil. I get on the ride and a grown-ass man was screamin' for his momma.

-Bansa

From The Beat: Just because you get older doesn't mean that you stop being afraid of things. If you're afraid of snakes now, you're probably going to be afraid when you are older, too. Fear is a universal human emotion, at all ages.

Mother's Day

What makes my mother better is me and my brother at the Ranch to stay out of trouble. When we get out of jail and get a job and help her with a couple of dollars, that's what's make my mother better.

What makes my mother worse is that me an my older brothers getting into trouble and getting locked up and not being out for Mother's Day and not able to get her a present.

-Oscar

From The Beat: You took this in a different direction than we had in mind, but you still wrote something important. It's clear that your actions (and your brother's) don't affect just you and your brother, but also the woman who loves you and who has sacrificed so much for you. There's really only one Mother's Day present that would make your mother happy, and that's having you home with her to stay. When you get out of here, do you have it in you to give her that gift?

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

I think people just be scared of me just cause I dress in a lot of black and most people be scared of stuff like that. They get scared of my baggy clothes and how some people feel nowadays they feel when you dress a certain way they should think of you like that. I you don't wear like preppy cloths and light clothes or bright clothes.

-Lioues

From The Beat: Why do you think people are more scared of people in baggy clothes than in tight clothes? Do you feel like you should change how you dress because other people are scared of that? Do you think you'll dress in baggy clothes for the rest of your life? What do you have to say to those who are scared of you just because of your choice of fashion?

Ready To Get Out!

Man, what's good wit' Da Beat? It's ya thug, Young Bunte, holdin' it down in Unit 6, but I still got love for Unit 3.

But, chea, it's goin' on two months and I'm still in this weak-ass jail. Now I'm thinkin' maybe I should've listened to da fam and stayed out da streets, but when it ain't no love at tha house, that's where I feel most comfortable.

But, yeah, I'ma try and knock this out at home placement, so I can show da fam what I can do. But, chea, dat's all I got to say. A'ight, I'm out.

-Young Mattock

From The Beat: You know, it's far more important that you show yourself what you can do. Yes, it's important to show your family and whoever else you want to show. But you are the one who has to live with the consequences of your choices, so you are the one who has to show what you can do. We know you can do it, but only you know if you will do it.

Adults Who Act Like Children

I seen hella old people act like kids because some don't know how to act like adults, sometimes because of their anger issues or maybe like when people are fighting for something. Some adults are just playful and like acting like kids.

-Tito

From The Beat: We wish you had given us some examples of what you're describing here. Examples always make what someone writes come to life.

Happy Mother's Day

I missed Mother's Day, the day my mom needs the most attention. Wow! I can't believe this is happening to me. Well, it's just something I got to live with and hope my mom has a good Mother's Day without me. Happy Mother's Day, Mommy.

-Chowsee

From The Beat: Your mom needs attention every day, because that's what she gave you. It's fine to hope that she had a great day, but you must find a way to give her the things she wants most — you, at home with her. Why can't you believe this is happening to you? Didn't you have something to do with it?

My Life

I'ma talk about my life. Since I was a little kid, I was raised in the city. After I start growing and growing, about like when I was beginning 6th grade, about 12 years old, I wanted it to be a gangbanger. Since a little kid, every time I came out of my house all I see was gangbangers. Later on, I became a gangbanger and start doing bad things.

Sooner or later, I knew I was gonna get lock up for something stupid, because that's how the life of a gangsta goes. Now I'm in here doing my time for the second time. I just wanna do my time and get out.

To all the homies in here, keep your head up do your time and get out.

-Weasel U

From The Beat: If you knew you were going to get locked up "for something stupid," and you've already been locked up once before, does that mean you like taking orders from others? It sounds like it to us. You claim that all you want to do is do your time and get out, but if you're committed to a lifestyle that you KNOW will lead to your imprisonment, then it appears you're just saying, "I like being a slave. On the street, the big homies give me my orders. And in here you give me my orders. I don't like thinking for myself, so please keep telling me what to do." Maybe that IS the definition of "something stupid." And maybe it's time for you to start thinking for yourself, because it is "yourself" who pays the consequences...

Changing My Future

What I'm trying to do when I get outta here, trying to be a different person and do my group home, don't be banging nothing, stop hanging around with the wrong people, trying to go back with my mom and take care of her. She the first woman that comes in first in my life.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: We are glad that you want to change the decisions you have made that took you here. But wanting to change is only a beginning. You also have to have a real plan, from day one. Go back to school. Don't go to the block. Stop hanging with people you KNOW will lead you into trouble. And remember, just telling your mother that she comes first is nothing if your actions show that she comes second...

My Mom

What makes my mom better than everybody else's is that my mom always cool with me. When I'm in trouble traveling, she always try to help me and she try do make me feel better. And the communication that we have is better than everybody else in my family. And one more thing... they looks! My mom better than they.

She always try to be my friend, and I think that's why my mom is better than everybody else's in my family.

-Jose

From The Beat: We can see how much love you have for your mother. But you know, Jose, if your mother always stands by you when you get in trouble, don't you think it's time to show her some of that love (instead of telling it) by not getting in trouble? Isn't it time you found a way to pay your mother back for all the sacrifices she's made for you by sacrificing some of the things you like to do, but which take you away from her? After all, she wants you with her where she can show you her love, and where she can feel yours.

My Mother

What makes my mother better than anybody else is that she doesn't need to say "I'm always going to be there for you." She's the only person that will never forget about me. My mom the only woman that would shed tears of love and pain and still be there for me. That's what make my mom better than anybody else.

-D Stars

From The Beat: You know what we really like about this piece? It's that you KNOW your mother will always be there without her having to say it. It's what she does, and not what she says, that proves her love. But love is a two-way street, so just like her, it's not what you tell her that matters. It's what you show her. We know she will love reading these sweet words, but we also know that what she wants more than words of love is you, there with her. Stop giving the system the power to take you away from her. Make some personal sacrifices (give up some of what you love doing that leads you away from her). She has sacrificed much for you. Now it's your turn.

Adults Who Act Like Children

I think adults do act like kids, 'cause my dad was trying to be a playa when he was already old. He was a parent and everything. He was acting like he was hella young when he wasn't. Well, he left my mom when I was two years old. His actions showed how childish his actions are.

-AP U

From The Beat: We know what you mean about older people trying to act like they're young. But it's interesting that you think "trying to be a playa" is acting like a kid. So, are you still acting like a kid, or are you moving into the role of responsible adult?

Mother's Day

What makes my mother just as good as anyone else... She did the same for me that everybody else's mother did for them. My mother brought me in this world, and I thank her for that. She has been a good mother to my brothers and sisters.

What makes my mother worse is that she doesn't care what she does. She doesn't take stuff from nobody. She will fight with anybody. She doesn't care if it is over some words or her kids, and that's why I love my mother. Happy Mother's Day Mom.

-Young David

From The Beat: We admire you for talking about both what makes your mother good and what makes her not so good. But we're confused a little, because you say that "what makes her worse is that she doesn't care what she does," but then you say that's why you love her. If you love her for something, how can that make her worse? Anyway, the most important Mother's Day gift you could ever give her is your own self — finding a way not to let the system take you away from her again.

Playing With Fire

Can I go back home, but I can't go home because I play with fire at school. Because the teacher see me and teacher call the Police. The Police pick me up in here, YGC. I want to go back home. My whole family cry about for me here in YGC.

-Kinson

From The Beat: Kinson, you're going to be out soon. When you get out, try to remember a very famous saying in English: "If you play with fire, you will get burned!"

Mother's Day

My moms is the greatest because she be here sometimes when I need a shoulder to lean on. I got much love for her as well as my father.

My father been here since day one. I got much love for her and hope she has a god Mother's Day, and I hope the best for her. Love you mom!

-Jonathan

From The Beat: We hope you know how lucky you are to have both a supportive mother and a supportive father in your corner. Now it's time for you to be in their corner, too, by finding a way to be with them instead of letting yourself be taken from them. They have sacrificed for you (which is what good parents do). Now it's time for you to give up some of the things you love for them. You feel us?

Thinking Twice

When I was young, I was a good kid. But when I moved to Richmond, I changed 'cause of the neighborhood I live in. There were thugs and gangsters in every corner of my block. When I was young, I remember hearing gunshots in my 'hood, and I was scared. I ran straight in my house and next thing you know, my friend's older brother got shot. Ever since then, I knew that hanging around in the streets were dangerous, but I was a knucklehead and still be in the street. But now that I'm in juvy, I thinking twice.

-Lil' Vago

From The Beat: It's easy to think twice when you're locked up, but the time to do it is before you get locked up. Then, it's not so easy because you don't think about getting caught for things you do. So, how will you remember, when you are out, to follow your own excellent advice to think twice? (By the way, do you still live in Richmond? If so, The Beat may be able to direct you to a job we know about there when you get out... Let us know.)

Problems

I started having problems when I hung out with elders who were drug addicts and had guns. They were telling me to do stuff for them and they were going to pay me. I thought that was cool, so I started getting in problems. They were paying me $40 to rob phones and other stuff. I was living in the projects so nobody wanted problems with me. They were protecting me. That's what I thought. I got caught by the police. That's when I realized I was being used. I was in problems.

-Yato

From The Beat: If you now realize that you were being used by others, then you know it's time to take back control of your life and your destiny. Don't let others trick you into handing the most precious treasure you have — your freedom — over to a system that can't possibly care about you as much as you must care about yourself.

Happy Mom's Day, Mom

I got the best mom ever!
She always there for me
Even if I am in the halls
She might not visit me every day
But she's behind me every court date
We have a special relationship
She a young mom, and she up to date
Just like me
I don't have to talk all proper
I can talk to her in code, and she talk to me the same way
But she make up her own words, too
She coo'
And I can't wait until my birthday
'Cause she goin' let me get my first tattoo
But if I got it early, I'm sure she not goin' trip
'Cause it's goin' be her name hella big
I love you, Mom. Happy Mother's Day

-Star

From The Beat: You've expressed your strong love for your mom very well in this poem. You're very lucky to have such a loving and supportive mom. But now it's time for you to demonstrate (rather than just write about) that love you have for her by giving her the one thing she wants more than anything else, and that is for you to be free and there with her! Next time you're tempted to do the things that bring you here, think about her!

Maybe I'm Too Dark . . .,

If I could see myself through their eyes, I would probably act the same way they do. If I was walking behind you and you had your purse loose, I'll be scared too. If I walked in your store with my purse half empty and it could fit a shirt or two, I'll be scared too. But only in a dream world. You gotta snap back into reality.

It's all right to be scared, but I'm not a criminal. I'm not going to do or say nothing

your daughter will not do or say to your face. I love the attention, though. It makes me strong.

Maybe my skin too dark, hair too nappy. If I was light with long straight hair, would that make people's eyes like me? If I could see myself through their eyes, life would be perfect...

-Ashley

From The Beat: We suspect that racism does play a large role in how people see you. Of course, racism is not limited to white people. Even black people often favor lighter skin over darker skin. It seems so stupid to us! In any case, we're happy you are "not a criminal" and that you are honest and straightforward. We're not sure what you mean, though, when you say that life would be perfect if you could see yourself through the eyes of others. Why would that make it perfect? What is a "perfect" world to you?

Like A Child

Man, my uncle always acting like a child. Not just a child, but he act like he still a teen. He be wearing new name brand clothes. He plays PS2. his car got more beat than my dad's African drums.

He's about 42. he's a twin and his twin acts the same way. He just recently got about nine tattoos, his four kids' names.

-Black Panther Pride

From The Beat: Why do you think both your uncles (the twins) never grew up? Does it embarrass you when they act like this? How do you think they should be acting?

Thinkin' Back

As I daydream in my room...
I can't help but picture our days
Back when w went to the Sweeetheart Café

Remember when we went everywhere together
And talked to one another
I hope our friendship will never fade
Because it's what we made

I know what I did was wrong
I've been here for way too long
Yeah, I deserve it
But it doesn't fit
If you know what I mean
This ain't for me
I just wish they could see

I know this is stupid
But I hope it makes you smile
Even though I've been here for a while
I'm trying to make the best of it
I hope you will , too

-Baby C

From The Beat: Except for the last line of this tight little poem (which we had to take out because it included numbers whose significance we don't know), we love the fact that you recognize the importance of friendship. Our experience is that true friendships often outlive passionate love affairs, and can sustain you through difficult times. By the way, what is it that you wish "they" could see? You acknowledge that you did wrong and that you "deserve" the consequences, so what would you like "them" to see that they don't?

My Mom

My mom is the best mom in the world. She buys me stuff, keep me fitted. She let me bring chicks in the crib, and she works hard to keep me fed. She loves me to death and she's my best friend.

-Black Panther Pride

From The Beat: If she's your best friend and loves you to death, then why would you do the things that let some stranger take you away from her. You owe her more than just these loving words. You owe her yourself, and that means some sacrifices on your part. Are you ready?

Mother's Day

My mother is my desire
My mother is wonderful
My mother is trustworthy with words
My mother is grateful of her children

-Yung Breezy

From The Beat: It sounds like her children are also grateful for her. Now it's time to show that gratitude by not giving the system the power to take you away from her.

Mother's Day

My mother is very special. She's always been t here, through thick and thin, always there for me from beginning, middle, and end. I love her very much. Dat's my ride or die chick, because everything she do is just for me.

While everybody hated by my side, she stayed and she did that for me when she didn't have to. Mommie, dat's why I love you. When you trusted me, I trusted you. Y our proved for me, I proved for you. I love my mom. Yup, yup, I love my girl.

Happy Mother's Day.

-Glamma Chick

From The Beat: This is a powerful message of powerful love, GC, and we know your mother would want to read these words. But we also know that she wants something from you in return for all that she's done and all that she's sacrificed. She wants you home with her. She wants your actions to match your words. She wants you to sacrifice some of what you like doing — the things that bring you here — so that you can give her the best gift she can imagine, which is you by her side! Don't forget.

Good Mom, Good God-Mom

I wanna say Happy Mother's Day to my best friend who is pregnant. She is due this month. She young, but she go' be a good mom, while I'ma be a good God-mom.

Sometimes I feel bad for what I did to get incarcerated, because I promised my best friend I was going to help out during her pregnancy and be there for her afterwards. But I only fulfilled half of that. I was with her 'til her sixth trimester. But when I get out (if I do,) it's just go' be me, her, and my Godson. I'ma consider my family.

But, anyways, Happy Mother's Day, "Shae Beast" and also to me.

-Brina

From The Beat: We hope she has a healthy baby. We know that baby is going to be loved. By the way, we're not sure what you meant by her "sixth trimester." There are only three trimesters in a pregnancy. At the end of the third trimester comes birth. But we add our voice to yours wishing her (and you) and Happy Mother's Day.

Mother's Day

I don't know what makes my mother better or worse than everyone else because I don't know how other people's moms are. I know my mom has more better in her than worse. She always looks for the best for me. And even though I don't reason sometimes, which put me back in here, she's still there for me; she still supports me all the way.

Even though sometimes she won't come visit me, I look at that as better than worse 'cause she's just tryna have me think if I wanna see her every day I shouldn't put myself in the position where I can't.

So, yeah I love my momma and Happy Mother's Day

-Jr F Ryhda

From The Beat: We admire you for not trying to compare your mom to other moms (who you don't know), but only judging her on how she has tried to help you. If her infrequent visits help you to remember what you're missing by allowing yourself to get taken from her, and that knowledge helps you to stay out in the future, then you are learning a valuable lesson.

My Mom Is A Big Inspiration In My Life

What makes my mom so special? Because she support me 100%. She always got my back, no matter what. She is a big inspiration in my life. We have an outstanding relationship. We also have a sisterly relationship. I love my mama to death. I don't know what I would do without her.

I thank God for my mother. I stay in contact with her 24-7,because I'm in an out-of-home placement, so I don't get to see her every day. But on the weekend, we enjoy each other love and company. That what make my mom better than everybody else.

-Ebbie

From The Beat: You say you don't know what you would do without your mom, but you have allowed yourself to be taken away from her, and now she is left without you. That powerful love you express has to be demonstrated in actions, not just in words. She doesn't want to see you locked up, but free where you can spend time together. Can you give her what she wants?

A Lot Of Pain And A Lot Of Joy

If I could see myself through others' eyes, I think I would see myself as a young lady who has been through a lot of pain and a lot of joy. But most of all, a person who has dreams and a bigger desire to fulfill them. I wish other people can see all of this, instead of a girl who just comes from the projects and never is going to amount to anything in life.

-Sey Sey

From The Beat: The most important thing is not the misperceptions of others, but your own view of yourself. If you envision yourself as someone with goals and dreams to fulfill, then you will make that vision come true. And then it won't matter what anyone else said or says about you.

Mother's Day

My mother is special in a lot of different ways. I don't feel she's better than any other adult, but what makes her special in my eyes is that through all obstacles, she's a very strong person for herself and our family. She always here for me, locked up or out and about.

I love my mom. She's a mother and my best friend. I ride or die for one person only, and dat Mom!

-Kelsey

From The Beat: We're sure your mom will appreciate these words, Kelsey, but words pale in comparison to deeds. You must show your mom that love you're feeling by making some sacrifices for her, as she keeps making for you. Feel us?

Feelin' Sad And Depressed

What's good with The Beat readers? As for me, I'm not feelin' this system at all 'cause I got a family visit today. It was coo' as hell, feel me? I got to see my lil' one, my baby mama, and my moms.

I had a good time with my son. He lifted my spirit up. But the reason I'm sad and depressed is because at the end of my visit, my baby mama started crying. Shhh be hella sad.

-Tone Kiki

From The Beat: We hope that the fact that we had to take out your last lines (as you surely knew we would) doesn't make you even more sad and depressed. We also hope you keep this thought in mind: If you see how much your boy lifts your spirits, just remember how much his spirits need lifting (and staying lifted) by the presence of his father in his life. Keep your head up!

If I Could See Myself Through Their Eyes

When people see me they automatically think I'm a bad person and that I'm up to no good. Some people tell me that the lifestyle I'm living I'm not going to make it to see 21. I hate when people say that because they don't know the real me. It's cause they can think whatever they wanna think.

-Mike

From The Beat: So, if people are making all these judgments about you not knowing the real you, what is the real you? And are you the real you most of the time or just some of the time? We understand how frustrating it can be when people view you as something other than what you really are, so how can you show them the real you? Should you even have to show them?

Another Prison Story

It's like I'm forced to live in my mind
For my current predicament is not the business
My wished upon dreams is shed away in the development of tears
And they seem to fall no further than the vision in my eyes
I open my eyes just to have them closed again
Not wanting the world to see the hurt inside
I often smile to hide the pain but lord knows I want to cry

This mask of mine is fading away more with every day
And cold ass reality got me caught shivering with my zipper stuck in my coat
Lately, I've been finding myself panhandling for happiness,
Looking to borrow a smile because I'm emotionally broke
Picture me asking for 1 cent of joy to shake this 5 cents of pain
That comes with this prison joke
I want to fly with the angels but these demons won't let go

My attitude is 400 degrees and my temper is so hot
Like the energizer this pain goes on and on and it won't stop
How long must I remain under this curse?
I feel like I'm paying for the sins of my ancestors who now lie in the dirt
Is I'm a seed born in debt and Karma wants all its money worth?
If so, what part do I deposit to shake all this hurt?

They convicted me outlaw
And now treating me like a dog on all fours as if I crawl

E-MONEY ***E-Money's back and he's back with a vengeance. This is the writer we're used to and unfortunately he had to go back to being incarcerated to realize he needs to maybe reconsider how he's living, but whatever it takes, we're all for it. However, there are parts of us that wish, he wouldn't have to go through all of this. You see, E-Money has a great heart and though this week he only sends us, "Another Prison Story" (which is an outstanding poem by the way) we know that deep down he can't wait to get out and try again. One thing we know about E-Money and that's whatever he dedicates himself to, he thrives in that area. Hopefully, he'll re-shift his focus the next time he gets out because we would love to witness him doing great things. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Thanks E, we go way back, SF/YGC days! The loyalty speaks volumes.***

I guess you can all it another prison story
And another caged soul crying out for liberation
Against the wings of this crooked laws
But I'm going to keep swinging it out
No need for kneepads, I refuse to fall
A prince among my people waiting for a King's call

You either feel my pain or don't feel it at all
For like the children of Israel this pain "Is real"
So you either with me or its "F" all y'all
My style brings controversy like the final call
And like Malcolm X I only know how to give it to you one way, and that's raw
Some of y'all maybe don't like what I'm saying
But I got those who want to kill me for less
Balls is my vest
It's going to take a lot more than prison steel to penetrate this chest
So like the freedom of speech I'm going to speak my piece
Forever standing solid in a world of freaks

MOEBIUS ***When we're on our last strand of rope, searching for anything that'll offer hope, sometimes that's when we get the most creative. But a lot of times we give more attention to the story rather than the actual storyteller. Well, unfortunately, and as much as we would like to, we can't offer anything to this writer but a platform to project his darkest thoughts and feelings. Which brings us to his amazing poem, "Dark (Loss Of The Light)" He's writing to someone who's obviously very special to him and searching for the light at the end of a very dark tunnel. We appreciate everything he's shared with us in this poem and hopefully whoever he's writing will too. He's writing from Wasco State Prison in Wasco, CA. We can't wait to hear more. Well, we guess we have no choice but to wait.***

Dark (Loss Of The Light)

I try so hard to hold onto belief.
I'm trapped in this hell and I need relief.
I scream out to someone but they can't hear me now
I'm locked behind doors I must get out of somehow.
I get so lost every day, I struggle to find a way,
Thinking about all the things you say, try to stay focused on better days.
I'm lying face down in my disgrace.
I'm so sick of the mud and I hate its taste,
Can't we just beg for our souls to be free
I'm trying so hard to just hold on to belief.
How can a love live so far away.
I'm burned from the loss of the light of the day.
So many screams are released in the dark.
How many wounds I endure can't you see all the scars.
You pretend not to know my pain you spend your life thinking its all okay.
But look at how my days have been stolen away.
The miles we've traveled and the distance we've came.
What is different now and what has stayed the same
Can't begin to live in this grief.
I try so hard to hold onto belief
Can you give me a reason not to bleed
'Cause I'm so far down just one more reason is all that I need.
Pick me up 'cause I'm drowning in shhh.
How much deeper and darker can this revenge get.
I only want to be loved can't you see.
But I can't kiss you 'cause you've been kicked in the teeth.
My lips are torn and my hearts underneath.
But I'm trying so hard to hold on to belief

ANTU ***This next writer brilliantly uses birth as a metaphor for getting out of jail. For just like each human being that was ever born is a survivor (we all were the union of a sperm and egg and that union alone is an act of survival), every person that can survive such a horrific experience as jail is a survivor. But like he says in the title, "After Difficulty Come Ease..." The things that are the hardest to go through, sometimes are the greatest lessons for us in that they teach us more than an experience that's so easy we can experience it without regard. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA.***

After Difficulty Come Ease . . .

From the womb of my mother the struggle begins,
Traveling as a spec of sperm with many sperms but I'm the one to win...
From the embryo stage to the position to be born,
As I come through this tense mission of my mother's womb to enter a life that's a cloudy storm...
You know I can feel it coming on in this world of sin,
Through many years stop at 19 just to be back lock in...
A new womb to be birth from, a process that's no mistaking
A 25 to life sentence they got one
So many lives they're breaking...
In truth I'm innocent for the life they gave me,
But I'm guilty for another crime but that may sound crazy
This crime don't hold no life sentences,
But 25 to life I plea my innocences...
In the midst of it all I grasp to understand,
It's just another move of thee supreme being hand...
Being rebirth is a painful journey,
Knowing that God will manifest his divine plan through the works of my attorney...
Though it's a state appointed and all I'm left with,
But its one person who possesses power over all things that controls my life sentence...
Eleven years 3/14/07, dried out tears,
No one loves me, but I still see heaven...
Heaven is a condition if you don't know,
I'll be in a peaceful mind-state with ease when I'm let out this hellhole...

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THE BEAT WITHOUT

CHRIS GRAJEDA *We were beginning to worry about our beloved and most gifted poet, so we were happy to receive this latest installment of spine-tingling rhymes that encompass ideas we never thought would come from someone as stubborn as he used to be. However, sometimes the most stubborn are that way because they are natural born leaders. They don't just take ideas as they come without challenging them and making them their own. This week he hits us with many great poems and mainly he's questioning the lives of those who's heads are where he once was. It must be sickening for him witnessing the downward spiral of people who were once close to him, especially since he's making an incredible effort to stand alone as a man and veer away from such a destructive lifestyle. As many of you know, he was once a participant in our 150 (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) workshops. Then, he got out and was working with us for a hot minute. But unfortunately the life he now despises had caught up with him, so now he's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, CA. We know he'll remain strong because again, he's a natural leader. Hopefully, we'll hear from Chris some time again soon, because we miss him as we're sure you readers miss him too.*

Reluctant Memories

Hard steel, bars, razor wire and handcuffs
Warriors, gangstas, thugs ready to exploit each other's bluffs
Prison life, they say it's no joke and not a place to be
I can't describe prison; you would for yourself have to see

I'm paying consequences for my misjudged responsibilities
Why listening intently to "any willing wisdom" receptively
I have furious anger and resentment towards all of my foes
But yet I stay patient, always on my toes

What keeps me going day in and day out, 24-7 around the clock
Is memories of my brother "Ant" and I as little kids terrorizing the block
Good times are what I call them, but in reality it's the past
But I could tell you one thing; they were righteous as they last

Now as I complete each day one-step at a time
I try to forget all the memories, and keep my heart blind
The more that I remember, the more hard-heated and hurt I become
Missing my freedom, my family, my life
Accepting reluctant memories as they come...!

Why Do...

Why do individuals like to front and stand tall:
But yet in life they don't give it their all:
Why do they need to act as if they're bad ass:
But yet they don't educate themselves and go to class:

From my view I think they want to feel a part of something:
But yet their so-called "gang" don't benefit for nothing:
I could see if you're misunderstood, but why not get back on track:
Why don't you do it legit, ball out of control and not have to watch your back:

You probably scared of what your so-called "homies" think of you:
Don't let that weak excuse stop you, just do what you do:
I know it is easier to do wrong than it is to do right:
But at the end of your positive struggle,
You'll have the "true" finer things in life!

What keeps me going day in and day out,
24-7 around the clock
Is memories of my brother "Ant" and I as little kids
terrorizing the block
Good times are what I call them, but in reality it's the past

Love, Care, And Joy

Love, love, love...
So beautiful and sweet
Love, love, love...
Sweep you straight off your feet

Care, care, care...
Warm embracement and all
Care, care, care...
I'll be there on call.

Joy, joy, joy...
Natural bliss and excitement
Joy, joy, joy...
Living light in enlightenment

We got to play the game we call life, and survive with our instincts and facts:
Beware of the smiling faces
'Cause your closest homies will inflict metal in your back

Check Mate

Life is partaked as a very serious game of chess:
If you fail to pay attention you could receive a knife to the chest:
Always got think before you move and thrive on every action:
Can't afford to slip and fall or mistake a little fraction:

You got to keep your game tight and out-strategize your adversaries:
Stay one step ahead and prevent your preferable vision from getting blurry:
The game isn't easy. It's demanding so you can't blow your cool:
Improvise stay patient and play no one's fool...

It takes a strong mental state to succeed in life these days:
Either in the ghetto or in the streets and even in prison you have to play:
We got to play the game we call life, and survive with our instincts and facts:
Beware of the smiling faces
'Cause your closest homies will inflict metal in your back:

It's your choice and disposition to take the most hopeful view:
Even if it takes most of your life living within church pews:
So as I play this live chess game that's dealing with fate:
I allow myself to be guided by self-wisdom and prevent a CHECKMATE!

CHRIS GRAJEDA (CONT.)

Reality

I sit here in prison, caught up with my life on pause:
Reflecting on past mistakes that were done amongst a defective cause:
Now bonded in a cell with nothing but time on my hands:
Ego too big to let go, so I still have forcible pride when I stand:

I turn stress into motivation as I meditate on perfection:
I contemplate on every move and thrive for my corrections:
Living on past memories that take my mind out of my physical state.
Reminiscing on good times that takes me far, far away:

Reality is a "B" and karma a ferocious fatality:
No more flamboyant lifestyle as I sit and face reality:
I had to pull my life back on track, because I was headed for self-destruction:
Fighting with my inner being, my spiritual destruction:

As I close my eyes at night and complete another day:
I lift up a few words to God, and silently ask for a better way:
As I extort my own knowledge and try to use my inner skills talently:
I wake up to another day in prison facing effed up reality!!

Think About It . . .

Think about it...
When you get incarcerated you're affecting more than one life:
You affect your family, your friends and sometimes your wife:

Think about it...
Why do people want to live a flamboyant lifestyle?
Go dumb, sell drugs run the streets and go wild:

Think about it...
Why do the state of California seem to build more prisons than schools?
Is it because we're bringing it upon ourselves to act like fools?

Think about it...
Why do people get locked up and all of a sudden want to get on your knees and pray:
You should have thought of that on the streets when you was running them everyday:

Think about it...
All I ask from you is just stop yourself right now – look at your life and "Think about it!"

JD ***Writing from N.A. Chaderjian (one of The California Youth Authority's worst institutions) in Stockton, CA, we bring you this first time writer who's got a message for the young writers. And he's sending the message through the perspective of doing many years in The California Youth Authority and even doing some time in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, where coincidently we now receive some of our greatest writing. He's been through many struggles in his life and we get the sense that he's tired of all the monotony that comes with being incarcerated. Plus, he's now one of the older people in our juvenile justice system, so he probably also has to deal with a lot of immaturity amongst peers. We're going to send him a Beat Within in the mail with hopes that he'll continue to keep in touch, for we can tell his words will be a great addition to the publication. Welcome back to The Beat JD!***

What I've Learned From Where I've Been

Well, for my first publish I will start out like this. I am 23 years old and still going through CYA.

When I was fifteen, I did my first crime, I spent one year in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall fighting my case. During that whole year I did not know what to do. I got visits every week I was there, but I was scared my family would give up on me and lose faith, but they never did and still haven't until this day. Anyways I lost my case September of 2000. When I went back to B12 Unit, I was hurt. A day later my cell pops open and I step out staff tell me that I am moving to B8 (max unit) right then and there my heart broke and tears started running down my face, I started to think about family and was I ever going to see them again I told myself. I went down to B8 and had to be escorted to my cell. When that door slammed shut I cried again. Well, I was down in B8 for 2 weeks then got moved to B9 (max) stayed there for a week and a half then left to C.Y.A.

I spent 16-19 years old in the system then paroled from Karl Holton. I spent two years at Preston and 1 year at Karl Holton. I gave up hope for awhile then I received visits from family, right then and there I knew there was an angel watching over me, when I finally saw my family, time went by quick. When I got released for the first time in three whole years, the real test came, the test of living life on life terms.

I thought I could live in the past but I couldn't, I was out one year and violated parole, now I'm back where I left off, doing time again. Then released once more. I was sentenced to 9 1/2 years in CYA from juvenile courts in Santa Clara County. Anyways I have been in and out of CYA now going on 8 years, and I still have a year and nine-months left to serve until jurisdiction is over, my time ends at 25 years old.

What I want to share with all you youngsters is this: to all of you that are in juvenile hall, think smart, don't think you could start where you left off before you got arrested, because you can't, time still moves on. Don't think time will stop for you because it won't.

Since I've been in and out of CYA I have lost and missed four deaths in my family all because of my criminal thinking and negative decisions I make in my life. I have spent Christmas in CYA since 1999, I've only been out for two.

For those who have kids and a baby momma, it's time to step up to the plate and be their to hear your children say their first words, take their first steps, take them to their first day of school be a father, the father who you never had trust me don't get sucked into the system like me please.

Ask yourself one question, are you ready to take on the outside world? Can you overcome all the challenges that come your way? I'm not here to change you only you can change yourself and your whole thinking process so please stop living in the past, live for today and your future, take it one day at a time, have faith. God has a plan for each and every one of you youngsters, but you have to believe in yourself and not give up.

So as an inmate of CYA Chad please take the time to process this experience and use this letter as a tool to avoid the Juvenile System and negative decisions. Remember think before you act also think, feel, act and stop beating yourselves up take responsibility for what you've done, it's never too late to start over, nobody is perfect.

EDWARD ATKINS ***We ran the first two entries of "Joy And Pain" a long while ago, so it was nice to receive entry three in the mail. We also received entry four, but we're going to hold off publishing that until next week. We can't wait to read it and you readers will see why as this entry leaves you on the edge of your seat. He talks about the argument he got into with his girl over another girl and when we read what happened, we couldn't help but not blame her. It sounded like she had pretty good reason to start trippin', but we weren't there even though the way Edward writes we believed we were there. But then, something happens that trumps everything. He receives a beautiful gift that hopefully was the glue to his relationship with his girl and himself. Again, there will be an entry four next week, so please don't be impatient. Well, what are we saying? We're being impatient also. We want next week to hurry up and come so we can read the next chapter. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.***

Joy And Pain Entry Three

…Labor and all that it induces exudes pain but the birth of a child is an innocent joy filled with the essentials of purity even in times of hardship…

Spring 1999, sweat, love, and a hint of weed smoke compliments the air as I lay with exhaustion atop the once presentable bed. Erica a female I've been seeing for a period of time off and on is parading around half clothed leaving little to the imagination. The only reason I'm even here is because my pregnant love and I are at odds and have been since she caught me cheating, well allegedly. To bring it all up to speed while we were in the mall an old friend, female, that I hadn't seen in about 4 -5 years recognized me while I was checking out a few CD's. My girl was in the movie section and just as I was about to head her way, Precious out of nowhere literally jumps and wraps her arms and legs around me, which she's always done even when we were younger. My love saw this and had that "Oh It's Like That" look on her face. Man. Man. Man. I tried to explain I even introduced them but that just made it worse and to add salt to a wound we exchanged information and agreed to meet and catch up which I guess was a very bad call on my behalf.

Anyways, we screamed, yelled and said a few hurtful words and here I am laid up with an old interest of mines until she cools her heels. My pager goes off, it's my love, but like an idiot I refuse to call her back not wanting to feel like a sucker. Erica looks at me with those "I know you're not just going to up and leave again" look. I ignore her and occupy my time rolling up a fresh one. Over a period of an hour I've consumed a whole fifth of Paul Masson and an ounce of herbals best and as I sulk trying to relieve my heartache I receive another page. I stagger trying to get up. In my hand is the phone but my drunken mind and conscience is in a battle on whether I should call and crawl like a dog home to the woman I love or should I play the tough role and leave her stranded like I felt she left me. I slammed the phone down forcefully before I allowed myself to fall weak to her again. It seems that since she's advanced in her months of pregnancy she just bugs out and trips on me for nothing. At the time she can go into labor at any given day now, but when she said, well yelled, for me to get out and that she didn't need me and didn't want me around her baby which I thought was our baby I bounced and didn't care to look back.

I'm feeling claustrophobic. Maybe it's the effects of the weed and drink. Erica's facing me I guess she wants to go at it again, but my conscience is eating at me so I yelled for her to stop and rushed her head from my lap. I need air so I get dressed, pulling on the same sweats I wore three days ago when I left my girl, I couldn't build up the nerve to go back and collect my belongings. Shhh…I ain't even got a spot to put them if I did.

The streets are thick with fog but the zestful air is slowly bringing me down from my high. My pager beeps again, this time it's a different number, but it's one of her friends so I still don't bother returning the call. I stop and go inside Denny's. It's empty except for the few truckers that are sitting off in a booth near the back doing more eating than talking. I order a cup of coffee, I hate the stuff, but I need something to bring me down. I sip here and there and the bitterness causes my face to cringe. I guess I've been watching too many movies. I pay and leave a 2 dollar tip, $3.37 left to my name. Boy was it stupid of me to leave my stash in the Nike shoebox in the closet at her house, since she acts as if I don't pay my share of the rent and bills. I've been strolling the streets for almost 2 hours making frequent stops here and there, cussing at no one in particular, but my words are directed towards her. Why do I put up with her shhh…?

We looked at each other without speaking a word for a few minutes, I guess we were confused on what we were to say.

Before I could come up with an answer my pager goes off again. It's my brother and at the end of his number he put a 9-1-1. I sprint to Erica's house and the rush of the wind brought me near sober. Breathing hard I grip the phone and with lightening speed I dial his number. On the ring he picks up,

"What's up?"

"Man, what's wrong with you?"

"Nothing, why?"

"People been paging you all night and you act like you can't call back."

"Man, what's up? Is that why you paged me 9-1-1?"

"Naw, your girl is at the hospital fool." My heart sank.

"What?" I choked up trying to say.

"Yeah man, she's in labor." I dropped the phone pushed by Erica and was half way up the street to my car. I swerved and weaved through traffic like it was the Daytona 500. I came to a halt in front of the emergency entrance and while my car was still running I entered asking questions at a hundred miles per hour. I was antsy as hell on the elevator heading up to the maternity ward. When the doors opened I was surprised to see my brother, my girl's friend and a few others. I wasn't allowed in the delivery room because I reeked of alcohol and Marijuana, but at 5:43 a.m. my daughter was born and I became a father to my second child. When my girl moved to recovery I was allowed access only after they were sure I was sober and I didn't smell of any substance.

When I entered the room, there was the sight of angels. I stood in the doorway, at first unnoticed due to the conversation that was underway, but once my presence was felt and all eyes fixated on me the room started to empty. We looked at each other without speaking a word for a few minutes, I guess we were confused on what we were to say. Throughout our relationship, me and my girl never clashed like this last bout we had. So, it was a blur as to how we should address such.

"Can I hold her?" I said, breaking the silence.

"Of course you can hold her boy." We both bust out laughing. As I rocked my daughter to sleep, we talked and poured our hearts out to one another, vowing never to say those things again. As hours passed and both of the women I loved were asleep, I sat there in the bed, my arm around my girl and my daughter, nestled in between. I kissed them both softly and fell asleep with two women I knew were everything but a dream.

…My Angels, both as pure as can be, hold my spirit close and know that I'm right there amongst thee, although my absence has inflicted a strain, trust and believe I will always remain. My Angels, both woman and child, wait for me with open arms because your patience will be worth the while… your man and your father.

Heartfelt love

Real Talk

LOUIE ***Writing from the SHU (Security Housing Unit) in Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, we give to you this first time writer, but long time Beat reader. He's read all the pieces from the youngsters and this is his response. He's been down for close to fourteen years, so he has a whole lot of experience in this field. It would be wise to listen to him. He talks about having kids while incarcerated and the pain that comes along with seeing them grow only through pictures sent in the mail. He titles his piece, "Real Talk," and we couldn't have given it a better title, for what he's saying in the piece is just that — real talk. His heart goes out to those who are thriving to follow in his footsteps, so we should show our respect and at least take what he's saying into consideration. Especially since he's been there and done that. Well, let us know what you think, and Louie, you don't have to thank us for anything, we're the ones who should be thanking you... Thank you***

What's up? First off, I'd like to extend my utmost respect to all The Beat readers. It is in my sincere hopes that this piece finds you all doing good in health, spirits, despite your current situation, and that you're all maintaining a solid mind state and positive outlook on life.

Well allow me to introduce myself... My name is Louie. I am currently in the S.H.U. at Pelican Bay, and I have been locked up for the past 13 1/2 years with 12 years spent in S.H.U. I am writing this piece so that I may share some insight with you all in hopes of opening some eyes. I've been a reader of The Beat for several years, yet this is my first time writing in it. What compelled me to write this first piece is for one: having experienced a growing of the mind and realizing and accepting the fact that this destructive lifestyle that we seem to get caught up in is only destroying lives and its not worth it. Second: I am a father of two teenagers — a son that is 16 and a 15-year-old daughter. Unfortunately, my son is already going down the same path that many of you are on and he is currently in a placement facility. In many ways I feel that I am to blame for my son's wrong choices that have led him to where he is at now, even though I understand that he is responsible for his own actions — it's examples he sees (his dad a gang member and in prison) and believes he has to follow the same pattern. So with my son now locked up I've made it a mission of mine to reach out to our youth in hopes of encouraging them/you to get right and choose a better way to live you life 'cause all this doing time and being associated with gangs... there is no future and that's real talk! And third I am writing this piece because as an "older homeboy" and to speak as someone who has been there and done that I feel that it is my duty to use my life experiences and wisdom to direct our younger generation in a more positive direction that can lead to a better and productive life.

I'm not claiming to be a positive role model for any one, but who says that gang members like myself cannot encourage others to do good and live a better life? True, my life isn't a success story, yet, and I don't have a track record of working with youth at risk, but I have a solid understanding of that vida loca lifestyle, and I know first hand what can happen if you don't change your ways. The message that I am trying to get across to you all is simple... "There is no future in living that street/gang life, nor is there any future in doing time," straight up!

I read a lot of the pieces by some of you and sometimes I trip a little because it's like some of you just haven't learned and you want to live the vida loca. What's it going to take for you guys and girls to see that that type of lifestyle isn't happening? What good can possibly come out of it? At one time I thought the same way. I was making dumb decisions and not tripping on the consequences of my actions. I learned the hard way due to my stubbornness and thinking that I knew everything. I was gang banging since I was 15, doing drugs (mainly PCP) ditching school, getting kicked out of schools, getting arrested, on probation, and by 16 I was doing time in juvi and placement facilities. So I can seriously relate to most of you, if not all of you. But thinking back to my teenage days when I started getting caught up in the mix. I really never had any one trying to talk some real sense to me and trying to direct me away from the drama. My dad had passed away when I was 11 years old. So in a way I grew up without a father figure in my life. He and my mother had split up when I was 3-4 and basically my dad was in-and-out of my life until he passed away. My mother on the other hand tried to lead me in the right direction, but once I turned 14-15 I started doing my own thing and not really listening to my mom anymore. The fact that many of my other relatives were gang members, including my own dad, I felt that I had to represent. And of course the group of friends that I kicked it with didn't help out my situation any better. But it was my ignorance and inability to look at the bigger picture of my life and so I remained caught up in the gang culture. If I only knew then what I know now I would have definitely got my act together and done things differently.

All of you are still young with a whole life to live. You all have the ability, potential, and opportunities to do something better with your lives. It is a big mistake to think that since you are young you can mess up right now and later in life you can get your life together. But that street life doesn't work like that in case you don't know. I come across a piece in The Beat where a person wrote... "I hear all these stories about people turning their lives around when they hit 25, 30. That makes sense to me because I am not ready to stop." After I read that I immediately thought to myself, "homeboy just ain't knowing." All it takes is one mistake or one wrong decision/choice and that's it — prison or death. That's the cold reality of that vida loca life style and it can happen when you're 15, 17, 20, or 25 years old. So my point is this, don't wait until you hit 25-30 to turn your life around because you just may not get that opportunity. Young teens are getting killed every day due to gang violence while many other young teens is catching murder cases. Think of your future, start looking at the bigger picture of your life and start planning ahead. Break that habit of living life day by day because it only keeps you from looking ahead with no sense of direction. Your life is too valuable to waste by being involved with gangs and drugs. Okay, so maybe you're one of the hardcore thugs that are loyal to the game, but here's the quick reality check... that shhh is not doing you any good! The crazy thing about it is that when these same hardcore thugs end up in prison stretched out then they begin to realize that they have to spend 10, 15, 20 years or the rest of their lives in prison. I've spent the past 13 1/2 years of my life in prison missing out on so much life. That's 13 1/2 years that I can never get back. Fortunately for me I am expecting parole next year, maxing out on 15 years, but those 15 years is nothing compared to those who have to spend the rest of their lives in prison.

I understand the pressure of staying down for the hood and representing, but there comes a time when you have to put your life first and do what's best for you... bring that gang life chapter to an end and start a new chapter of life because if you allow yourself to remain caught up in that boochit, It's only going bring you down and possibly ruin your life. Yeah, I am sure that many of you have heard the same story before, but after hearing it over and over I would hope that some of you would see some real truth in the stories being told. How many of you can honestly say that you wouldn't care if you came to prison for 2, 3, 5, 10 years or life? KEEP IT REAL! How many of you (those that are already a mother/father) wouldn't mind being away from your child for 3, 5, 7, 10, 15 years?? Or just being away from loved ones for year upon years?

It's not a game people — this could happen if you don't get your act together and that's no exaggeration. In 13 1/2 years I've personally seen my kids twice. I've basically had to see my kids grow up through pictures and my communication with them is only through letters. I'm not allowed to use the phone, nor do I receive visits. I have nieces and nephews that I have never met, including cousins that have been born during my time locked up, brothers that I haven't seen in 13 1/2 years, and I have only seen my mother 4 times in the past 13 1/2 years. Not to mention the many close relatives of mine that have passed away and I have not been able to go to their funerals and pay my last respects. Than on top of all that I have to deal with the drama that goes on behind the prison walls. That's no way to live a life. I'm 33 years old and its like I have wasted half my life doing time starting in juvi. And when it is all said and done, bottom line is it got me nowhere.

Yeah, I have matured a great deal along the way and maybe prison has made me a wiser man but look at what it cost... my 15 years of freedom. But I say to you guys and girls, why even put yourself in that messed up situation when you can learn from other people's experiences and mistakes? You don't need to learn the hard way — it doesn't make you more hard-core. It's about being smarter and making the right decisions that will help you get ahead in life and enjoy life in a positive way. Now is the time to seriously evaluate your life and make decisions to get your life on the right track. It doesn't make you a weak person to want a better life- it makes you a smarter person that realizes that there is more to life than being caught up in gangs/ street life. Make that change before its too late.

Well before I bring this to an end I'd like to give thanks to The Beat for allowing me the opportunity to reach out to our younger generations through the pages of The Beat Within. Know that this piece is just the beginning and you can expect more pieces from me. Until next time, keep your heads up and stay positive.

SHARKY ***Let's journey through the mind of a man who's thoughts are so precise and delivered with the utmost eloquence. Let's take a ride through the mind of a man who's obviously tired of his people doing the negative things they're doing and who had to realize that before you can help someone else you have to help yourself. This man is wise beyond his years. He's doing a twenty-five to life sentence in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. And while on a journey through life, he's learned many things. He first starts us off with an incredibly perceptive piece about the cause and effect of gangs. His ideas are hard to disagree with as he's been through that lifestyle and is now doing many things to help younger people who happen to be following in his footsteps. Then he gives us a whole lot to think about with his amazing poetry. We can rant and rave about this next writer all day, but you'll just have to read for yourselves. So without further ado, we give to you, Sharky, and we hope he has the energy to keep in contact with us. We'd really enjoy developing a correspondence with him.***

Cause And Effect: Mind Pollution

The link between local street gangs and dangerously influential prison gangs is an issue that parents and aspiring young gang-bangers should constructively discuss and be aware of.

Unless you've been exposed by a family member or friend who happens to be a committed soldier to a prison gang, you are probably naive to the fact that close to all of the gang violence on the streets today is directly influenced by the politics written and enforced in prison.

There used to be a time when children were off limits and exempt from any form of participation and/or exposure to the business of a once clandestine element. Times have since changed and with those changes it is now an acceptable practice to induct children. In fact, it is encouraged. Why? Because children are easy, even eager, to be manipulated and utilized by those that they choose to look up to. The sad truth is that they are viewed as nothing more than a means to an end in the eyes of someone who could be so cold and callous. Exploiting their services for small stuff, to crimes as serious as murder.

Prison gang members are masters of manipulation. It's literally a part of the gang membership curriculum in prison to season oneself in what they view as an art. A classic example of such manipulation is to get a kid to believe that his sacrifices at such a young age can only warrant a short vacation in YA versus—"If I do it, I'll be facing a life sentence." The truth of the matter is kids who do serious crimes on top of being labeled a "gang member," get the same punishment as an adult. The truth is gang members don't get breaks or second chances.

Kids look up to gang members who've been to prison for a number of reasons. For starters, they are celebrated as somewhat "survivors" who paid their dues on the front lines of a war. The whole image and appearance of being a warrior of some sort is a misconception that troubled kids aspire to become. Seasoned veterans even go so far as introducing kids to concepts, constitutions and laws that initiate life-long commitments to gangs, in or out of incarceration. They do so with the same tactics that a salesman would use to promote a product.

Speaking from a personal standpoint, there was a time when my homeboys meant everything to me and I considered them my family. Since I was unable to find a common ground with my parents and our encounters were usually unpleasant, I found solace in the company of those I felt showed me the respect and understanding that I was yearning for. Because I was always at odds with my father, I looked up to older gang members on my block and those returning home from Prison/Youth Authority. This was my first interpretation of respect and illusions of what a gangster was.

Respect is a key factor within any criminal circle. Without it you could quickly be seen as a liability, someone in the way. For a young ambitious gang member who yearns for the same respect as those he sees around him, the only logical way to acquire it is to emulate those who appear to have the most respect. Unfortunately, that would be those in prison for putting in work, or those returning from the journey.

And so begins a destructive cycle of crime and punishment. As I draw once again from an objectionable past of my own, I recall the tug-of-war between good and evil and how my indecisiveness gave in to the latter. The latter consisting of a love that seemed unconditional at the time, verses my parents who without a doubt were out to protect my best interests. However, I was unable to comprehend those intentions or their approach to counsel me at the time. As a result, I viewed my parents as the oppressors and I rebelled. Because of the poor choices that I made as a young man, I spent most of my adolescent years in Juvenile Hall and Y.A. (Youth Authority). Somewhere in between, without me even realizing it, my loyalties shifted from family to the code of the streets and the politics of a prison movement. I also became institutionalized.

The grave effect that gang members have on the youth of today can be summed up in two words: "Mind Pollution." The process of Mind Pollution begins with the "Propaganda" that originates in prison, which in turn spills into the streets by way of those paroling. As I mentioned earlier, kids are fixed on the illusion that those who go to prison and survive exemplify the characteristics of what it is to be a gangster. Including that poison that profusely flows out of their mouths.

In conclusion, I've merely outlined that root cause of a virus that I call "Mind Pollution." However, there are many contributing factors that effect the direction of an at-risk adolescent in the form of mind pollution. Unfortunately, that would entail chapters of elaboration. Instead, I submit that Parents/Guardians consider the following in their course of intervention:

We vs. They dichotomy
Positive guidance vs. Dictatorship
Trust vs. Suspicion

The We-versus-They Dichotomy is an approach that implies when we (Parents/Guardians) speak and direct, they (Our Children) shall obey. We take that position of a dictator, where the need for respect and authority out-weighs the concept of love, understanding and positive guidance. We fail to promote the healthy independent judgment of a young man by looking at everything with a suspicious eye and blindly believing that our harsh criticisms contribute to the inspiration of a child to do or try something different.

For the sake of argument, I yield to the position that perhaps in our desperate quest to deter our children away from the jaws of corruption and evil, we've unconsciously pushed them into compromising positions, waiving a finger in anger and frustration as opposed to "influencing them" to embark on a generative path. A family is like a team. It's our responsibility to "coach." If it's so easy for a crook to mislead our children into a cycle of self-destruction, then what does that really say about our tactics as coaches?

It's a wake-up call for us to step up our game and get to really know our kids. Frustration is a poor excuse for inadequate coaching.

With hopes for a better future.

Movin' Past The Past

Lately I been thinking of the past
so close behind.
Where the aftermath of yesterday
weighs heavy on my mind.
Intertwined with new horizons
and torn between two sides,
where the past and present journey
Eternally collide...
Nowhere to hide, and so I strive to find
a peace within my quest
at odds with every demon
that lurks inside my chest.
Undaunted by dilemmas,
I calculate the steps
'cause every one is crucial
to resurrect what's left.
To be a better man than what I've been,
a better teacher, leader, friend.
A better father, better son
awakened from oblivion.
Redeem my soul for every sin
despite these walls that shut me in.

Survival's My Religion

In a world that's inattentive
the meek seek hope in vain.
A hustla drinks to help him think
and numb his hunger pains.
Blow life into the game?
I'll paint a picture crystal clear.
Survival means to stifle any consequence you fear.
Like Malcolm X conveyed,
by any means to persevere,
these faceless slums and heartless guns
that curse us far and near.
Why talk about solutions
we never act upon?
Though warring souls may yearn for peace
the path is stretched too long.
If there is a god who's watchin'
I trust he understands,
why some resort to measures
conflicting with his plan.
On a wretched piece of land I stand,
a product of "The Hood,"
Where the "The Hustle" contradicts intent
to make it out for good.
Survival's my religion
in a narrative that's real,
sometimes you have to think and act
against the way you feel.
Like a soldier in distress,
every step's a constant threat.
Over money, drugs and sex
under pressure every step.
Who's next—Envision death
through the eyes of your friends,
doped up or locked-down
in correctional pens.
Out of touch with the stars
where nothing else matters.
Where ruthless minds thrive
and fragile ones shatter
to pieces. My thesis,
a dose of the truth.
Where the plan's inconclusive
for saving our youth.
In a jail cell I mean well,
inside my heart
where dreams fall apart.
Alone in the dark
where my body grows old
with nothing but yesterday's demons to hold.

SHARKY (CONT.)

Redirect the Cycle

Too blind to see the naked truth complaisant as a slave
we'll never find the answers in so much empty space.
A man devoid of feelings, destroyed by senseless pride
the prelude to a chapter, "How Many Men Have Died…"

Homicide before you're thirty, irrelevant to some
a losing situation, on both sides of the gun.
Purgatory of a lost soul confined to restless sleep
while children of the ghetto keep slipping twice as deep.
Yearning for a straighter path but don't know where to look,
addicted to the hustle, till they get their freedom took.

Rebel of a losing cause positioned on the brink,
so much could be accomplished but we never stop to think.
Or focus on an eye full instead we choose to stifle,
Any opportunity to re-direct the cycle.

What Can You Do?

You can think like a crook
when it's so easy to,
or go outside the cycle
of those preceding you.
You can hustle off a product;
a means to reach an end
and be part of the virus
that's killin' all your friends.
You can carry on tradition
and risk your life in war,
or use your sense to question
if it's worth dying for.
You can compromise your future
and lose it in a blink
or stop to reconsider
and use your mind to think.
You can be a part of the problem
that's poisoning our youth
or strive for the solution
that stems from sharing truth…

THA STRUGG

When we have a platform to express ourselves, there's no limit to the possibilities. Whether it's a publication such as The Beat or a studio, people have found it can be a sanctuary for their darkest thoughts and feelings. In this next writer and great lyricist's case, it's the studio. He writes what the studio means to him. What it means to create a rap, a poem, and then be able to express that over a beat is so blissful it's indescribable. Well, not for this master with words as he reflects exactly what the studio means for him. He's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA. We're glad we are able to act as his studio for the time being.

Studio

The studio is my sanctuary,
My heaven
My Virgin Mary
I mean I find peace here,
The atmosphere sensational,
My musical fears strictly confidential,
The studio is my refuge
The space is huge
I get to lace up my shoes (Air Max)
And relax to the max
No stalkerrazzi flashing Kodaks
Know you honchos and prima donnas love that
Yo, imagine being in sunny Puerto Rico
With Rosie Perez massaging ya' back
To top that
You and Roselyn Sanchez skating in the May back
Laid back,
Crank up the Beat,
In the studio my soul speaks,
To Nas and Kelis (God's angels) inspired me,
To write my destiny
What a heavenly decision,
Visionary, blessed with David's vision,
Molded in the womb to be a musician
Shady proportions
I have no time for
Close the doors
Poor was my life before
That's something I can't ignore
But something I can use in war
The microphone is my sword
The headphone is my shield
Imma diplomat on the battlefield
Like Jim Jones
The studio is my black stone.

CECIL WEST *This next writer rhymes so easy that some of us believe he rhymes all the time. He must rhyme in casual conversation and the whole nine because it seems like rhyming is easy for him. And we really enjoy it because rhyming is easy for us to read. However, his thoughts aren't so easy and simple. His thoughts are complex and they make us think. For whether he's writing a love poem to Brianna or looking at himself in the mirror, one thing remains true and that's his natural ability to express himself so effective that we are actually thinking what he was probably thinking when he wrote these poems. He's writing from the Columbia Correctional Institution in Lake City, Florida. If you enjoy great poetry, please read on. You'll be missing out if you don't.*

Can't see the thoughts that's in my mind

Now that I think about it, they're not so kind!

It all develops from my brain . . . Caused by the suffering, hate, sorrow, and pain.

This Burning Rage

This burning rage
It's as if I'm trapped in a cage
Holding so much pain and misery inside
As these lonely tears run from my eyes
Struggling to contain this rage
With visions of my enemies faces
Wanting to crush them with a mighty blow
As the heat simmers from burning coals
Causing all kinds of thoughts to flash through my mind
As I sit here doing my time
This burning rage is trying to consume me
As I suffer from so much grief
Losing my parent's the day I was born
Leaving me in this cold world all alone
To suffer so much pain and abuse from others
Never had no sisters or brothers. Or no one I could call a friend
Wondering when will all the pain and misery end
Two people trapped in one body
The good in me screaming and hollering!
Reaching out for something or someone
To remove all this pain and loneliness
From the bad and the good
A part of me been touched by the corruption in the hood
Something I can't escape
Will I be a thug all the way to my grave
Or will the good over come the evil
Removing this terrible fever!
That's burning deep inside.
It's becoming a struggle
For me to hit it money, drugs, and material things I crave
As I continue to feel this burning rage
Which might erupt at any time
And cause me to commit a violent crime
Something the good is fighting against
Sometimes I wonder if the good stands a chance
As these thoughts run through my head
I pray God helps me control
This burning rage!

Brianna Brianna

Brianna, Brianna I can't wait till I get home
To hold you in my strong arms
Loving you with all my heart
Your beautiful smile shining light where it's always been dark

Brianna, Brianna, can't wait till I get home
To see you in them sexy ass thong's!
I am who I am
A hustling thug in love with my beautiful Brianna
Wanna hold you and squeeze you tight
Making sweet passionate love through the night
Living the desire in your beautiful brown eyes
And your seductive sexy smile
That touches my lonely soul.
As our bodies come together in a perfect mold.

Brianna, Brianna I can't wait till I get home
To hold you in my strong arms
Loving you with all my heart
Your beautiful smile shining
Light where it's always been dark

Brianna, Brianna I love you so
Missing your tender kisses and hugs
And all the beautiful times we've chased
I want you to know I'll soon be there.
Face to face
My beautiful Brianna no other woman could ever take your place
Hoping and praying you feel the same way
No other man can take my place
Do I ever cross your mind
As I think of you all the time
Do you ever reach out to me
Seeing me in your dreams.

Brianna, Brianna, I can't wit till I get home.
To hold you in my strong arm
Loving you with all my heart
Your beautiful smile shining light where it's always been dark.

I am who I am
I love you with all my heart.
Brianna, Brianna

I Look In The Mirror

I look in the mirror and what do I see
A handsome brown face looking back at me
A strong structure to my chin
Saying nothing of what's deep within dark brown eyes
With an adorable smile. Shaved bald head that shines in the light
I must admit a handsome sight
Thick chest with muscular arms
Abs that say I'm extremely strong
Muscular thighs and muscular calves
And a perfect round bust even the girls get jealous
I look in the mirror and this is what I see
But I can't see my heart that continues to bleed!!
Nor the spirit of my soul.
Over the years it's grown extremely cold.
Can't see the thoughts that's in my mind
Now that I think about it, they're not so kind!
It all develops from my brain…
Caused by the suffering, hate, sorrow, and pain.
Now that I sit here it's all so clean
It's not the person that you see you need to fear
It's the person you've created over the years
If you push too hard he'll possibly kill
Many are beautiful to the eye
But it tells you nothing of what's inside
So be real careful when dealing with people
You could find yourself six feet deep
The first impression is not always real
I ask myself questions when I look in the mirror!

As I Sit In My Cell

As I sit in my cell with my pen and my pad
The lyrics that I spit is extremely sad
Been on my own since the day I was born
As my parents left me in this cold world all alone

Doing what I must to survive
Society hate me for staying alive
My mom and my dad was addicted to drugs
Couldn't show their only son no love
Raised in Poverty stricken by hate
Struggling to stay alive each and everyday!
Started out stealing from the rich man's store's
Cause I couldn't afford food or clothes
Praying to the creator up above
My heart crying out for him to show me some love
In and out of detention centers and the school for boys
Satan using me as his toy
Society didn't understand me at all
All they cared about is I was breaking the law
Not realizing that I had no choice
I was a lost soul still a little boy.

As I sit in my cell with my pen and pad
The lyrics that I spit is extremely sad
Been on my own since the day
I was born
As my parents left me in this cold world all alone.

My role models was drug dealers, pimps, players and hustling thugs
Them brothers and sisters showed me some love
Started to sell pot
Teaching me the game don't' stop
During the year I thought of my sister
God knows I truly miss her
Never forgetting the promise I made
As I stood beside her lonely grave
Destroying the ones who introduced her to drugs
Street people of who I grew to love!

As I sit in my cell with my pen and my pad
The lyrics that I spit is extremely sad
Been on my own since the day I was born
As my parents left me in this cold world all alone, all alone, all alone.

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

My Pen

Through my pen I draw power
As I sit here writing for hours
About my life
And this world so full of strife, violence, hate and blood...
So much corruption in the hood
Kid's using and selling drugs
Makes you wonder where is the love
Mothers and fathers teaching their kids' the game
Soon to find themselves in a prison cell or someone blowing out their brains!
This is the world we live in everybody's taking and no one's giving!
We all know jealousy generates hate
Something none of us can escape!
I've seen it all...
Through winter, spring, summer and fall.
Young girls walking the street selling their bodies
For less then ten dollars only to get a hit of crack
Once you catch AIDS, you can't give it back!
Young men selling their souls
Walking around for weeks in the same clothes
Losing all self respect and morals
For crack or that almighty dollar!
Some even steal from family and friends
Becoming serious dope fiends!
Walking the street in a daze
Crack cocaine has made them slaves!
Many don't care if they live or die
I've held many women in my arms as they cried!
Cause they couldn't visit their own kids
Because of their lifestyles and the way they live
Addiction taking full control
Causing them to risk their lives boldly!
Many nights I've cried out to the almighty God
Cause of the turmoil of emotions deep within my heart
Not for myself
But the ones caught up in Satan's wrath!
I wonder when will al the madness come to an end
As I reach out through the power of my pen.

MICHAEL McKINNEY

Usually Michael sends us many poems all at once, and this week is no different as we're only publishing five (there may be others in our medium-sized stack). The poem he sent, "Being Better," speaks volumes though, so we're grateful to have been able to read it and publish it. He's basically talking about what the title so clearly maps out for us — being better. He's been one of our most consistent writers as of late, so he demands our respect without actually demanding it. He's writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida. We know we'll hear from him again very soon. Thank you for all you've shared with us, Michael...

Stop Loving Money Over Self

Money is not the answer to all things. And when we came into this world with nothing but our naked self, no money was attached to us. And we'll leave this world with nothing but our self and the meaning of money would not be able to go with us. And even money is not everlasting. It comes and it goes and as each and every one of us entered into this world as newborn babies, we did not even have the knowledge of what money is.

And at this same stage of being an infant if a bag with a million dollars was put in our hands it would be like we have nothing in our hands at all 'cause it would not mean anything to us 'cause we do not have the knowledge that we are holding this much money in our hands. But to an adult person who has greed for money and the knowledge to know how much money was being held in they hands not knowing that greed for this money blindfolds them. It tricks and traps them into the roots of all evilness. It keeps them believing in the dollar bill dream making them fall in love with the thoughts of always needing and wanting more money at whatever cost to get it. If it takes throwing they life away for money, then that's what will be done. And not really being actually aware of the fact that we put more into getting money than we put into making a better life for our self, and gaining that true knowledge of our self we need to know about self.

And once we learn the self is the moment we would stop letting money rule our life and rule our mind and hearts cause a life is way more precious than any amount of money in this world and if we only knew what all a mother had to go through to bring a life into this world, we would drop the love for money and learn to cherish and love the self. Its nothing wrong with having money and using it for all the necessity reasons and when we get money greedy and lose control over self about money and get our hands on a big amount of money we lose all sense of direction with life and this money and go spending crazy and using the money on everything but the right thing and end up going broke before we know it.

And now we are back on the same track as to wanting more all over again. And I know for most people it don't take a whole lot of money for any one to make it through life from day to day basic and with the knowledge I now have I no longer crave for money. And I don't have a love for money at all. But at times I wish to somehow come up with a lump sum of money for all the right reasons 'cause now I have enough knowledge about myself to use the money to help the homeless, to feed the hungry, to provide shelter for people who are living on the streets, to be there for the needy and not the greedy, and to help all the troubled youths get an education. This what I call having love for self and the people, not having love for the money. So lets let the love for money go and pick up the love for self and other.

MICHAEL McKINNEY (CONT.)

Learning To Be Me

Learning to be me was nothing easy for me to do.
I went through so much hardship
Until my life sometime would turn blue.
Knowing many wise things
That would always keep me ahead of the game
But my mind with it's wrong thoughts
Tricked me into going against the grain,
And that would get me into more trouble than a lil' bit
And learning to be me was my perfect fit,
And learning to be me was, a way of learning to accept myself,
And be myself,
And learning to be me brought so many tears from my eyes.
Tears of pain, some tears of joy.
Learning to be me was a very hard fight ahead.
And there was times in my life I wish I was dead
But god kept me struggling for my life 'cause he knew what was ahead And now I have come to learn
That god had planned my life to turn out this way from the start
'Cause the first day of my birth he knew I was going to be hard. Learning to be me meant taking so many down falls in my life.
And I learn not to act without thinking twice
And learning to be myself at times could have cost me my life. Learning to be me was a u-turn I had to make by looking inside myself, 'Cause I was headed down a hill, in many ways of self destruction,
For not being a leader of my own life.
Learning to be me, open my eyes up to so many things
And has help me grow a mind through so much pain
And learning to be me, has helped me to stand the rain,
When I am hurting and in pain.
And learning to be me was one of my biggest gains.

I speak my mind just to show my concern
Just to let others learn of my concern

He's Forever With Me

God is forever with me.
Even though life has offered me so many hardships.
So much adversity, so many obstacles.
I have felt so much pain.
It's done been times I don't almost went insane.
But my better judgment was always informing me
That God is forever with me and he will never forsake me.
And knowing this alone is what kept me holding on.
And the reason I know it was a God. And he was with me.
'Cause there have been many times
I could have lost my life over nonsense
But I made it through a lot of death struck times.
Which was times that came up in my life very often.
But he was always with me.
Many thought I was not going to make it to see eighteen years old.
The word was always that young kid lil Michael,
Was going to get killed at a very young age,
But it never went down like that.
'Cause little that they know he was forever with me.
Now I did end up in prison at a very young age
But it was still all good 'cause God was forever with me.
He was always on my side forever more.
'Cause that's what god offers.
But I was too young and foolish to understand
That god was forever with me.

Speaking My Mind

Speaking my mind is a way of sharing my thoughts and the way I feel And I speak my mind without cutting any slack.
So most times with my words I don't tend to hold back
When I'm speaking my mind.
I don't mean to harm sometimes I speak my mind just to have fun Speaking my mind I feel that is best
Speaking my mind helps put my thoughts to rest
And speaking my mind is always kind,
But most times I speak my mind the thoughts be right on time.
I speak my mind with my best sharing and caring thoughts.
When speaking my mind I don't hold no one at fault.
I speak my mind to help someone see they wrong doing
And to correct they error
Speaking my mind sometime may seem to be out of turn
But I speak my mind just to show my concern
Just to let others learn of my concern
Speaking my mind to be encouraging.
And my thoughts that I speak will never be discouraging.
Speaking my mind when teaching you to learn
Speaking my mind just to confirm
And help settle the truth speaking my mind
So you can acknowledge my out spoken thoughts
With your attention my thoughts shall be caught
In a way of being understanding
To my out spoken speaking my mind
Like my thoughts are a golden token
Speaking my mind thinking of love at first sight
Letting my thoughts flow when I know they are right.

Being Better

I can be better life is about learning how to be clever
Whenever or where ever we must strive to be better.
Being better is the path we must take.
Cause life is short with every step we make.
So be better and don't take the path of the fake.
Cause that's the misleading way.
That would fool you into living against being better.
Cause it is never too late to correct the wrong way you have been living. Cause true changes are what makes the world go round.
Change for the better goes hand and hand with being better.
People of this world would try to trick you
Or make you feel as if the only way to get by is to live the life of the slick.

Knowing many wise things
That would always keep me ahead of the game
But my mind with it's wrong thoughts
Tricked me into going against the grain

Wasted Day

It's Saturday and I am here
Not where I want to be
Though I wish I were somewhere else
Here is what's in store for me
Though I long for a different place
Here is where I am stuck and so I face
This day I must somehow get through
Not something I am sure how to do
It's Saturday and I am here
Sadness comes over me
Thinking about all I could do
If I could somehow leave
But here is where I must remain
To face the sorrow and pain
Of the wrong choices I have made
Until they say my debt is paid
It's Saturday and I am here
While the world is out playing
Yet now I am no longer down
For I have started praying
I ask the Lord to bring to me
Some peace of mind, tranquility
So while these days I will remain
I'll be of service to his name
Satan lives in me

Let My Soul Smile

Through my heart
Let my heart smile
Through my eyes
I can't see you but
I can feel you
I can't touch you but
I can hear you
You are in the atmosphere
Around me
Sitting here in this lonely cell
Thinking of my past for it was hell
The memories in my head ring like a bell
My life to Satan I'm going to sell

The Sun

May the sun bring you
New energies by day
May the moon softly
Restore you by night
May the rain wash away
Any worries you may have
May the gentle breezes
Refresh your soul
And all the days
Of your life
May you walk gently
Through the world
And know it's beauty.

RAYMOND ***Poems that are short and sweet are accepted here at The Beat. This next writer hits us with a couple, but those aren't all the pieces to his puzzle. He gives us two poems we really enjoyed and to see people lock up so much talent causes us to be annoyed. Well, let us stop rhyming we can't compete with his word seduction. However, we still must continue with this introduction. In one of his poems, "A Portrait Of My Life," he uses colors to reflect the ills he's suffered in life. It's genius. He's writing from the Arizona State Prison Complex in Buckeye, Arizona. He has a way with words, so we hope you continue reading...***

Love

To love one must love life
To love another
One must love one self
So practice the act of love
In everything you do
And watch the love
Come back to you.

A Portrait Of My Life

Is there anyone out there
Who will hear the words I speak?
Anyone out there
With anguish just as deep?
With thoughts I'll paint a picture
My hands could never make
A masterpiece original
Unlike the world has seen
No strokes on a canvas
No brush of any kind
The only colors needed
Are the ones within my mind
What color should I use
As my hope and dreams have fled?
They all came to a sudden stop
I guess that must be red
What color should I use
As my life is just not right?
I'll bet it's not a yellow
Or nothing half as bright
What color should I use
When I'm living as I do?
So many times I'm down
I guess that must be blue
Look upon your life
Then paint your picture too
Use the colors in mind
It's not that hard to do
A mixing in my mind
Of my colors and my strife
It's a masterpiece original
A portrait of my life!

ANDREW MITCHELL ***This next writer used to be in our workshops in the juvenile hall in Santa Cruz, CA. He wrote us a short letter asking for a subscription and he says the only thing he has to donate is a poem. Well, that's perfect because that's exactly what we want. He writes a quick poem about love bringing about both joy and pain. We hope he finds the time to write us some more because we enjoyed the poem he sent us. He's writing from Wasco State Prison in Wasco, CA.***

Is there anyone out there
Who will hear the words I speak?

Love

Give me love, or more disdain,
Bring equal ease on to my pain,
Either extreme, of love or hate,
Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Give me a storm, if it be love,
I swim in pleasure, if it prove disdain,
The torrent will devour, my vulture hopes,
Of heaven that's, but from hell released,
Then crown my joys, or care my pain,
Give me love, or more disdain — loki
You need pain to love

THE POETIC PRISONER

Though this next writer works closely with us in the office, we haven't heard from him on paper in a long time. We guess too long as he's finally coming back to our pages. We first met The Poetic Prisoner in the Youth Guidance Center's (San Francisco County Juvenile Hall) maximum-security unit (B5). He went on to The California Youth Authority to do six years, got out in the beginning of '03 and has been working with us ever since. Damn, when will he ever move on, naw, we're just kidding. This week he hit us with three jaw-dropping poems, each reflect his most secret thoughts and feelings. The first, "Weakness In Numbers," plays on the cliché that there's strength in numbers. True to 'Poetic Prisoner' form, he takes an idea that's believed by the masses and flips to mean the exact opposite. He has good reason to. His second poem is one he wrote while on parole from The California Youth Authority (he's off now), and the last one is about his personal credentials. A brilliant poet and a very kind-hearted human being, let's give the floor to The Poetic Prisoner... It's great to have you back in our pages...

It's almost like they worship me,
They show love by popping out of the cuts.
They grovel at my feet and wait weeks
To see me piss in a cup.

I Feel So Important

I'm such a hot commodity,
It's like there's a price on my head.
It seems like because of me
Whole families are getting fed.
They want me all the time,
They can never get enough.
They say they only threaten me
Because they care so much.
When they cause separation
Between me and my family, they say it's for the better.
They only call to make sure I'm not breaking the law,
Which I'm expected to follow letter for letter.
It's almost like they worship me,
They show love by popping out of the cuts.
They grovel at my feet and wait weeks
To see me piss in a cup.
I feel so important...
For I know they only want the best.
I know they really care about my well-being,
I know they don't just want my urine test.
I know if it comes up dirty,
They'll watch my back and give me some rest.
I know they'd lock me up for my own good,
I know they'd remind me of why I was blessed.
I can't help but compare them to my mother whooping me,
And saying, "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you."
I used to think to myself, "Well, let me whoop her,
So I could show her I love her too."
But then I'd be considered wrong for what I do,
And two wrongs don't make a right.
So that means they can fuck me over
For the rest of my natural life.
I feel so important...
If there was a purpose for incarceration —
I think I missed it.
Where's the balance when all of the talent
In my community have already been labeled statistics.
They jock us
And do anything to stop us.
Don't want to see us shine,
So they throw us in a dark hole called lock up.
And then wonder why most of our minds
Are distorted.
Maybe because when it comes to our actions,
Only negativity is reported.
How would you feel if all your folks
Were dying, getting locked up, or being deported?
Well, if this is your way of showing you care,
You're doing a great job — I feel so important.

Weakness In Numbers

They say there's strength in numbers,
But I must disagree.
If it's an idea you can't fathom,
Then please follow me.
I know what it means,
And on the surface it makes sense.
But dig a little deeper,
Understand my defense.
Sure, the more people you have by your side,
The stronger you'll be as a group.
But that says nothing for the individuals
That are within that loop.
A sucka is a sucka,
And weenies come in packs.
A real man is a real man,
Regardless who has his back.
If I must lean on others
Whenever I do dirt,
What does that say about who I am?
What kind of stripes is that worth?
If I have differences with one man,
Shouldn't I handle it as such?
Or should I threaten him with how deep we are,
Using my associates like a crutch?
You see, the more I rely on others,
The more I weaken myself as an individual.
The more I look to outside sources for power,
The more I become pitiful.
So in a world where people crowd you like hyenas,
I stand alone as a tiger.
A massive web that's effective
Can be created by one itsy-bitsy spider.
But humans are ignorantly too brain orientated,
We spread and take over like diseases.
Do harm by the masses
Until all resources are depleted.
And now that our world's deteriorating,
We're in awe like we've witnessed telekinesis.
Do you think one man by himself
Could've broken the globe into pieces?
Do you have a glimpse as to why I believe
Being populated is a weakness?
Or is this idea still alien?
Does it still leave you speechless?
Well, let me dig a little deeper,
And see if we can understand it more.
You ever wonder why half the people gang-banging
Don't even know what they're fighting for?
Or why our president is so quick to declare battle
Without fighting in the war?
Why, a lady when by herself,
Can get into a crowd and be a whore?
The more people we're around,
The more we do stupid shhh.
We birth points that are pointless,
For there's pride in provin' it.
Who would you be in competition with
If there was no one else around?
How much of a savage would you be
If none of your homeboys were down?
Shot callers only have such a title
Because people are robotic enough to follow.
If the god you worshipped made people think independently,
Where would these people be tomorrow?
And even at a non-profit organization,
The more people there, the more opinions to please.
The more ideas you get published,
The more mouths you must feed.
So keep looking at the over,
I'm me because I take glances at the under.
And no matter what the hell you say,
I know there's weakness in numbers.

My Credentials

Take a second to listen to me,
There's something I'd like you to see.
Please take heed
And get over the fact that I don't have a degree.
My name isn't followed by M.D.
When people see me they don't get down on their knees,
I don't pretend to know what happened in the era B.C.
And haven't saved not one tree.
I don't give out licenses for parking that's residential,
Nor am I on my way to be presidential.
But I've been through many things,
Here are some of my credentials.
I have the power to make kids smile,
Whether incarcerated like me or free like you.
It's priceless having a 'square' appearance like your funders
With a life led that the young people can relate to.
They don't give out certificates,
For what me and my friends have been through.
But if me and you were to do a workshop,
You couldn't possibly reach the kids as easy and effective as I do.
There'd be no comparing the two,
But hey, that's not fair, for I haven't even been to college.
However, I know that can't be this great organization's
Only bar to measure someone's knowledge.
But then again,
I don't have my own foundation,
Nor do I see patients.
I don't own an office that's spacious,
And I can't cook the best dish you ever tasted.
But I can wow whoever you bring in my presence,
Make mistakes and for others create lessons.
People have come and gone from The Beat,
But with everything I do I reflect its essence.
I'm photogenic and have a voice made for radio,
I can write a poem about whatever I'm feeling.
I can conduct a workshop full of knuckleheads,

THE POETIC PRISONER (CONT.)

And still have at least one practice some healing.
I'm the easiest person in the world to talk to,
Our interns love when I make them laugh.
It's priceless putting a smile on their faces,
When they lead lives that are so sad.
I can't crunch numbers too good,
And I hate statistics.
But I can influence a child with no hope
To become utterly ambitious.
I definitely don't chase the suspicious,
And haven't been trained in upholding the law.
But put me in front of a group of lawyers
And I'm going to give it to them raw.
You see, my credentials aren't documented on paper,
And they weren't given to me by someone else.
My credentials are documented in my mind and heart,
And I obtained them through the exploration of self.
Your given credibility
Is no match to my natural versatility.
For while you're stuck in a box,
There's no limit to my capabilities.
Most of your knowledge came from books,
That other people wrote.
Most of my knowledge comes from introspection,
Attentive to every inner word I ever spoke.
You survive off the blood, sweat, and tears of others,
I am that blood, sweat, and tears.
You let media determine what you're afraid of,
I'm my own greatest fear.
For in my world titles are minimal,
And don't necessarily reflect a person's actual capacity.
Many geniuses have been called servants,
Many idiots have been called, "Your Majesty."
And though it's a tragedy that you're way past your prime,
And I haven't even reached my full potential.
I observe and understand all that makes me who I am
And I'll be damned if I'm defined by credentials.

TERRY MOSES

This next writer is a true veteran Beat writer. We say 'true' veteran because he always has great ideas to share with us. And not only that, but he also lets his heart breathe through our pages. And what an amazing heart it is... He gives us a very colossal piece of himself in the first poem titled, "Do You Know What You Feel." In this poem he gives us one of the most important lessons in life and that's loving ourselves. And though it may sound cliché, it's the honest truth. A truth many of us have spent lifetimes running from, even as we speak. It's one thing to say we love ourselves, it's a whole 'nother thing to really practice that clichéd statement. He concludes with a poem about accepting responsibility for our actions. Many of us waste time blaming everyone but ourselves for our current situations — however tremendous or minute they might be. But in the end, when you look over everything with a watchful eye, you'll see that we only have ourselves to blame because the only thing we can control in this world is ourselves. And if you can't even do that, you're in for a world of negative consequences. He's writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA. We'll be staring at our mailboxes awaiting the next installment...

Because Of You

The choice you make will dictate your future and fate,
Because you will not live your life to its full potential
If you don't apply yourself and you fail to pay attention
Because the knowledge that you neglect to achieve
Will only allow you to be trapped in poverty and so easy to be deceived,
Because it is your fate that is created by your own actions,
Making it vital that you pay attention
So that in your own life, you will not come up missing,
Where you now will only exist and the real fruits of life you can forget,
Because the karma that you created left you angry and uneducated,
Resulting in you being poverty stricken and drug addicted, filled with hatred
And now you're blaming society for you lack of education,
When it was you who decided to send your own education
On a permanent vacation
Where I must again mention because you failed to pay attention.

Do You Know What You Feel

At the peak of my frustrations from life's trials and tribulations,
I discovered while doing some personal observations,
That there was a part of me that I didn't even know,
Because myself told me that I cared more than I was willing to show,
But if it was me who told me then why didn't I know?
Now I'm curious and confused thinking is there something else about me
That I can't see.
Then a voice whispered to me some beautiful words of wisdom
That in my heart I'll forever keep,
And as these words were spoken they said learn who you are,
Then love what you learn,
Then in your life you will ultimately earn
The love and respect of some one else
Because first you started to love your self.

The grave effect that gang members have on the youth of today can be summed up in two words: "Mind Pollution." The process of Mind Pollution begins with the "Propaganda" that originates in prison, which in turn spills into the streets by way of those paroling. As I mentioned earlier, kids are fixed on the illusion that those who go to prison and survive exemplify the characteristics of what it is to be a gangster. Including that poison that profusely flows out of their mouths.

read the rest of Shark's BWO piece on page 44